(Re)claiming the Cyborg: an investigation into feminist prophecies of gendered technological embodiment in female contemporary performance art, with specific reference to Donna Haraway's 'A Cyborg Manifesto' (1985)

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Introduction

The cyborg (cybernetic organism), a term coined in 1960 by N.A.S.A. engineers Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline denoting a human/machine hybrid[1], has been a popular figure of twentieth-century science fiction, visualising possible futures of the human body within an age of growing technological innovation. Taking Margaret Toye's 2012 essay, 'Donna Haraway's Cyborg Touching (Up/On) Luce Irigaray's Ethics and the Interval Between: Poethics as Embodied Writing', as a point of departure, this dissertation examines prophetic notions of cyborg ontology in female performance art, with reference to the theoretical work of Donna Haraway.

As a philosopher of science and a feminist theorist, Haraway composed 'A Cyborg Manifesto' in the United States during the conservative Reagan era as a reaction against exclusionary boundaries that sought to separate women politically[2]. Her cyborg is a construction of reality and fiction, an 'ironic political myth', dedicated to socialist feminism and materialism, seeking to disrupt universalising ideologies such as Enlightenment objectivism and biological essentialism, critiquing second-wave feminist tendencies towards viewing woman qua woman as a universalised, naturally given ideal[3]. Haraway's cyborg thrives on unresolved contradictions as a way to explore embodied multiplicity. This position opposes branches of post- and

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[1] Jeanine Thweatt-Bates, *Cyborg selves: A Theological Anthropology of the Posthuman*, (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2012), 18; Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, *Cyborg Theatre: corporeal/technological intersections in multimedia performance*, (Basingstoke and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 18; Brenda E. Brasher, 'Thoughts on the Status of the Cyborg: On Technological Socialization and Its Link to the Religious Function of Popular Culture', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 64, No. 4, (Winter, 1996), 812: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1465623
[2] Parker-Starbuck, op.cit, 19
[3] Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist- Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century' in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, NY; Routledge, 1991), 149; Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 15, 27

transhumanism that, in the search for 'self-transcendence'[4], seek to enrich humanity at the expense of the corporeal; the body becomes an object to be controlled or even discarded.

Posthumanism and transhumanism are difficult terms to define as they are not conflicting, secure categories; transhumanism can be defined as a configuration of the posthuman, according to 'The Transhumanist FAQ' it is 'an intermediary transition between the human and a possible future human', this future human being defined as the posthuman 'whose basic capacities radically exceed those of present humans'[5]. Such prophetic visions are problematic because any enhancement of the human being would happen through bodily modification, with education and cultural development deemed as 'limited' and 'traditional'[6]. There are some transhumanist authors who attempt to assimilate Haraway into their discourse[7]. However, Jeanine Thweatt-Bates justly claims that the feminist cyborg, as an epistemological crossbreed of subject and object, rejects the disembodied objectivity of transhumanism[8].

Anthropological formulations that ultimately reject embodied difference, namely 'the classical ideal of 'Man'', have a long history; Platonic philosophy, Neoplatonic Christianity and Enlightenment humanism all viewed the mind and body as distinct

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[4] Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 112

[5] Humanity+, 'Transhumanist FAQ', n.d., unpaginated:
http://humanityplus.org/philosophy/transhumanist-faq/#answer_19

[6] Ibid, unpaginated

[7] Peta S. Cook, 'The Modernistic Posthuman Prophecy of Donna Haraway', in: *Social Change in the 21st Century Conference, Centre for Social Change Research*, (Brisbane, Austrailia: Queensland University of Technology, 2004), 5: http://eprints.qut.edu.au/646/1/ cook_peta.pdf

[8] Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 99; Jeanine Thweatt-Bates, 'Artificial Wombs and Cyborg Births: Postgenderism and Theology', in: Ronald Cole-Turner, ed., *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement*, (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 101; Baukje Prins, 'The Ethics of Hybrid Subjects: Feminist Constructivism According to Donna Haraway', *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, vol. 20, no. 3, (Summer, 1995), 352: http://www.jstor.org/stable/690020

entities. Thomas Aquinas in the 'Summa Theologica', influenced by Aristotle's hylomorphism, claimed the soul was the true form of the human being whereas the body was 'evil, seductive matter', and Leonardo's 'Vitruvian Man' of the Italian Renaissance became the emblem of Humanistic doctrines of rationality and self-reflexive reason[9]. Hegel then solidified patriarchal ideals of humanism into a 'hegemonic cultural model' in his philosophy of history which emphasised the self/other binary with the gendered Other becoming man's 'negative and specular counterpart'[10].

These disembodied qualities of the mind continue to dominate through areas of contemporary posthumanist and transhumanist thought, with 'The Transhumanist FAQ' being a leading example[11]. However, it is vital to recognise that "humanity" cannot be treated as a fixed, monolithic convention since, through socio-political and religious practices of discrimination and exclusion, there are those who are not even considered human in contemporary society[12]. Issues of gender, race, sexuality, ability, among others, are too significant to disappear into the disembodied concept of a transcendent posthuman that ultimately seeks to erase bodily difference. For Haraway, this false liberation is merely a secular institution of Christ's assurance to Simon Peter that he will guide Mary Magdalene to Heaven by making her male[13].

This dissertation builds upon Toye's research into the cyborg through an examination of four case studies of female performance art: Art Orienté Objet, boychild, Polly

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[9] Ibid, 109, 111-112; Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013), 13-14
[10] Braidotti, 2013, 15
[11] Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 102
[12] Ibid, 2; Braidotti, 2013, 1, 26
[13] Thomas O. Lambdin, trans., 'The Gospel of Thomas' [online], *The Gnostic Society Library*, n.d., unpaginated: http://gnosis.org/naghamm/gthlamb.html

Fibre, and Janelle Monáe. In order to examine potential constructs of cyborg writing as a 'feminist ethics of embodiment', Toye employed Irigaray's concepts of the interval and mimesis to investigate a potential 'materiality of language'.[14] Irigaray's investigative approach into patriarchal philosophical discourses through the reappropriation of metaphysical language links with Haraway's ironic adoption of the militaristic cyborg. By writing alongside male philosophers, Irigaray created an ethics of "between two" where sexual difference is always becoming in relation to the Other; the "interval" between them provides an alternative subjectivity which Irigaray has imagined in various figures such as the two lips, the mucous, and the angel, all of which explore ontological multiplicity and fluidity[15]. The liminality of Irigaray's two lips and mucous is identifiable in the cyborg with its various crossings between different entities; the boundaries between "self" and "other" are transgressed through their constant encounters[16].

The prophecy of Haraway's manifesto is that liberation will ensue by blaspheming against the dominant, patriarchal dichotomies within Western philosophical and scientific discourses. As Mary Daly has stated, the word 'prophecy' is useful if allowed to say more than it can within the limits of inherited language; she identifies patriarchal prophecies as those that have strived for 'sexist pseudo-transcendence' either upward or inward from common consciousness, whereas feminist prophecy is 'rooted in the power of being'[17]. Rather than a charismatic gift seized by a prophetic individual, feminist prophecy is a 'communal awakening' that usurps the silencing of

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[14] Margaret E. Toye, 'Donna Haraway's Cyborg Touching (Up/On) Luce Irigaray's Ethics and the Interval Between: Poethics as Embodied Writing', Hypatia, vol. 27, no. 1 (Winter 2012), 190
[15] Toye, op.cit, 187
[16] Ibid, 184; Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 72
[17] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation*, second edition, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1985, originally published 1974), 166

female identity in politics[18]. Both Irigaray and Haraway use reappropriation as a tactic to foreground necessary conditions and possibilities for new feminine languages; they rehabilitate female subjectivity through body metaphors to claim a genealogy of women's identity.

Arguably, ethics can be further radicalised through performance because it uses the body as its medium and often deals specifically with 'identity-based, political content'[19]. The individual body remains central to feminist performance as, since it burgeoned in the late 1960s, much work has sought to subvert dominant Western systems of representation in art galleries, museums and, more recently, on the Internet[20]. Each of these artists prophetically examines organism and technology hybridism in their work through diverse means of performance. Rather than risk generating fixed, ideological categories through the adoption of thematic chapters, case studies permit wider intersectional analysis and avoid what the transfeminist collective Laboria Cuboniks call 'the crass pigeon-holing of bodies'[21]. Artwork analysis will adopt the three 'boundary breakdowns' of cyborg ontology that Haraway signals in her manifesto, namely, human and animal, organism and machine, and physical and non-physical[22], to question how radically subversive each artist may, or may not, be with respect to disembodied posthuman configurations.

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[18] Ibid, 164

[19] Britta B. Wheeler, 'The Performance of Distance and the Art of Catharsis: Performance Art, Artists, and Audience Response', *The Journal of Arts Management Law and Society,* vol. 27, no.1, (January 1997), 37

[20] Jeanie Forte, 'Women's Performance Art: Feminism and Postmodernism', in: Philip Auslander, ed., *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, (Abingdon, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2003), 251 (251-268)

[21] Laboria Cuboniks, 'Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation' [online], *Laboria Cuboniks*, n.d., 6: http://www.laboriacuboniks.net/20150612-xf_layout_web.pdf

[22] Haraway, 1991, 151-153

However, before doing so we must discuss cyborg ontology in more detail in order for analyses of the performance work to be qualified. In her manifesto, referencing Nietzsche's renowned prophecy about the death of God, Haraway proclaims that the goddess is also dead[23]. Such a view has led scholars to link Haraway with Nietzsche[24], but how far does Nietzsche's philosophy support the embodied cyborg? I build on Toye's analysis of Irigaray to discuss her critique of Nietzsche's phallocentric theory of the Übermensch and how these issues are perpetuated through divisions of posthumanism. Furthermore, we will discuss critiques of Haraway's manifesto to illuminate certain regressive forms of cyborg subjectivity that I believe are directly applicable to the posthuman work of performance artist Stelarc. Finally, we will examine nomadic becomings, as formulated by Deleuze and Guattari, to hypothesise about a potential becoming-cyborg that may benefit a more radical cyborg aesthetic.

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[23] Ibid, 162

[24] Scott Jeffery, *Superhuman, Transhuman, Post/Human: Mapping the Production and Reception of the Posthuman Body*, PhD Thesis, (Stirling, Scotland: University of Stirling, 2013), 6; Brett Lunceford, 'The Ethics of Seeking Body Perfection, with Continual Reference to Heidi Montag', in: Steven Jogn Thompson, ed., *Global Issues and Ethical Considerations in Human Enhancement Technologies*, (Hershey, PA: Medical Information Science Reference, 2014), 69; Prins, op.cit, 352-353

Chapter One: 'The Feminist Cyborg' - A Literature Review

God(dess) is Dead: 'I'd rather be a cyborg'

In the final line of 'A Cyborg Manifesto', Haraway states that she would rather be a cyborg than a goddess, the latter referring to a historic ideal, a 'universal identity', stemming from religious articulations of women's unique affinity with nature[1]. Instead, Haraway constructs her cyborg anthropology in 'fields of difference', insisting the cyborg exists 'outside salvation history', outside the goal of disembodied transcendence from earthly existence[2]; however, the feminist cyborg is not inherently opposed to Christian traditions. Any presumption that theology cannot contribute to debates on post- and transhumanism assumes religion is inherently static and monolithic, instead of 'historically conditioned and continually dynamic'[3]. Feminist and queer theologies can offer positions of revelation by insisting on the diversity of human experience, challenging notions that gender is naturally given by God rather than culturally constructed[4].

Brett Lunceford and Baukje Prins have argued that Haraway's cyborg is a twentieth century interpretation of Nietzsche's concept of the Übermensch, however Keith Ansell-Pearson credibly argues, in reference to Irigaray, that male philosophers like Nietzsche have historically denied women their own creative speech by rejecting the

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[1] Haraway, 1991, 181; Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 36
[2] Haraway, 1991, 150
[3] Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 119-123
[4] Ibid, 109

material reality of the embodied subject[5]. In 'Marine Lover' Irigaray argues that

Nietzsche makes no space for sexual difference in his figure of the Übermensch

because, even though it is a prophetic figure that is 'beyond man and beyond life as

we know it'[6], it denies the material truth of birth through its drive for self-creation and

therefore female ontology is something to be overcome[7]. Nietzsche, in 'Thus Spoke

Zarathustra', insists on the overcoming of the old Christian metaphysical man and the

emergence of the overman as a 'force of Becoming' that values the lived experience

of the body[8]. In an act of mimesis, Nietzsche transvalued that from the Christian God

into his figure of the Übermensch as an affirmation of the will to earthly life but,

although revealing dissatisfaction with the present and a prophetic desire to create a

figure that rejoices in the earth, Irigaray sees Nietzsche as complying in Neoplatonic

ideals of an autonomous subject[9].

Irigaray mimes the metaphysical language of philosophy in an attempt to reveal that

which has been silenced and has thus generated its transvaluation: *le feminin*[10]. For

Irigaray, God becomes a projection of the embodied, sexed subject that is in a state of

becoming through an affinity with other bodies; God is not an origin or an end point

but a production of possible futures where there is self-love and love of the Other[11].

Irigaray's theory of the 'sensible transcendental' sets up a 'transcendental yet material

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[5] Lunceford, op.cit, 69; Prins, op.cit, 352-353; Keith Ansell-Pearson, *An introduction to Nietzsche as political thinker: The perfect nihilist*, (Cambridge, UK et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 20, 195

[6] Elizabeth Grosz, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and the Untimely*, (New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin: 2004), 135

[7] Ansell-Pearson, op.cit, 84; Daly, op.cit, 102

[8] Ibid, 42-44

[9] Ansell-Pearson, op.cit, 21-22

[10] Ibid, 21-22

[11] Elizabeth Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists*, (New South Wales, Australia: Allen & Unwin 1989), 179: https://nashvillefeministart.files.wordpress.com/2014/06/1989_elizabeth-grosz-sexual-subversions.pdf

ideal'[12], claiming that difference is constructed in a constant state of becoming, in the

vein of Deleuze and Guattari[13], between material embodiment and divinised

subjectivity[14]. By mimicking the patriarchal language and configurations of the post-

and transhumanist discourse, Haraway's cyborg may also subvert the erasure of

difference from potential futures, prophetically calling for an ethical vision of

posthumanity where the embodied affinity between different organisms and machines

breaks apart phallogocentrism.

A Utopian Vision: Cyborg Escapism

However, Haraway is not without her critics and, although this paper works to further

Toye's assertion that the cyborg needs to be (re)claimed from its many

misinterpretations, it is important to discuss these critiques because many raise valid

apprehensions about posthumanist discourses. Sue Short raises concerns about the

accessibility of the cyborg ontology, claiming Haraway's 'woolly' political agenda

privileges women in positions of high-tech industrial authority, who have the means

and opportunities to 'head a revolutionary vanguard'[15]. Peta S. Cook also raised this

issue by discussing the differences between those who choose to adopt the cyborg

ontology and those who either do not want to, or those who won't have the choice[16].

These are particularly potent criticisms of the cyborg anthropology, as Haraway does

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[12] Ibid, 181

[13] Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guttari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [online], Brian Massumi, trans., (London, UK and Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1987): http://projectlamar.com/media/A-Thousand-Plateaus.pdf

[14] Grosz, 1989, 181; Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1969), 21-22

[15] Sue Short, *Cyborg Cinema and Contemporary Subjectivity*, (Basingstoke, UK and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 82

[16] Cook, op.cit, 6-7

not discuss the potential issues of elitism within her manifesto, which may reinforce the hierarchical dualisms she aims to subvert; however, Cook's assertion that this issue inherently connects the feminist cyborg with the Extropian transhumanist collective is less attestable[17]. Cook believes that Haraway's apparently 'escapist futuristic solution' reinforces the Cartesian mind/body dualism by desiring a post-gender state, by which Haraway means not gender abolition but the surpassing of gender as we know it today[18]. Cook sees this as a denial of the 'known' gendered body and 'real' embodied experience in favour of a utopian 'postbiologicalism'[19], enforcing a biologically essentialist view on sexual difference by implying that gender is concretely fixed to the physical body. Short is also biologically essentialist in asking if 'the ''real' woman' will disappear within this cyborg ontology[20], indirectly constructing a dualism between real/unreal as if "woman" is a biologically set category; nevertheless, her question of whether the complete deconstruction of "femininity" will support the idea that women can have no signification with men is an astute observation, especially if the cyborg embraces Irigaray's practice of mimesis.

Marsha A. Hewitt and Robert A. Campbell both see the cyborg as a reinstitution of a salvific figure like Christ, even though Haraway claims the cyborg exists outside of salvation history[21]. Hewitt sees the cyborg as an abstract mythification, just as

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[17] Ibid, 1, 7

[18] Ibid, 7-8; Haraway quoted in: Nicholas Gane, 'When We Have Never Been Human, What Is to Be Done?', Interview with Donna Haraway', in: Nicholas Gane, ed., 'Annual Review: Explorations of Critical Social Science', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 23, no.7-8, (December 2006) 138

[19] Cook, op,cit, 5, 7-9

[20] Short, op.cit, 96

[21] Marsha A. Hewitt, 'Cyborgs, drag queens, and goddesses: Emancipatory-regressive paths in feminist theory', *Method & Theory in the study of Religion*, vol. 5, no. 2, (1993), 135-154; Robert A. Campbell, 'Cyborg Salvation History: Donna Haraway and the Future of Religion', *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, vol. 26, no. 1/2 (2001), 154-173: http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263409; Haraway, 1991, 150

"transubstantiated" and removed from the material world as the goddess[22]. She also ironically criticises Haraway's rejection of humanism during her own rejection of cyborg posthumanism[23]. Even though she raises the pertinent issue of the cyborg potentially relying on the capitalist commodification of technology and fashion for visibility and power[24], it seems Hewitt has underestimated the cyborg ontology by limiting her critique to human/technology relations. Campbell similarly brands the posthuman figure as 'the new civil religion of technoscience' where the cyborg, as a postmodern figuration of the goddess, becomes the saviour of this feminist, posthuman monotheism[25]. He claims the cyborg reaffirms the path to salvation and hope for what is yet to come through the use of technology, but fails to discuss the importance of embodied multiplicity within Haraway's cyborg ontology[26].

Reading Haraway alongside Irigaray supports the construction of the cyborg as *at least two* embodied ethics rather than reducing multiplicity to a unified, ideal subjectivity like the goddess[27]. The cyborg exists as and through identity, representing a diagnosis of humanity's relationship with machines and other organisms[28]. Posthuman figurations promoting the detachment from 'mortal flesh and blood', which will have capacities that will 'vastly outstrip our own'[29], are problematic because this future human becomes disconnected from embodied difference. Moreover, asking if the cyborg should even exist in the material world is

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[22] Hewitt, op.cit, 137-138
[23] Ibid, 140
[24] Ibid, 137-138
[25] Campbell, op.cit, 169
[26] Ibid, 169
[27] Toye, op.cit, 187
[28] Paddy McQueen, *Subjectivity, Gender and the Struggle for Recognition*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 94; Michael E. Zimmerman, 'Religious Motifs in Technological Posthumanism', *Western Humanities Review*, vol.3, (2009), 1
[29] Zimmerman, op.cit, 1, 3

problematic[30]; believing that total abstraction is more subversive than a constant play between the physical and non-physical is delusional because, without any form of materiality, the mind/body dichotomy is reinforced and the cyborg circulates within phallogocentric economies of representation. Nevertheless, it is necessary to recognise that embodiment does not inherently subvert oppressive ideologies; it is crucial to highlight each specific context to avoid generalised conclusions about organism/technology relations, and indeed Haraway's statement that women of colour are a cyborg identity is an issue due to the lack of quantified context[31]. Similarly, performance art cannot habitually situate itself in a radical, subversive position simply because there is the presentation of a live body, and the artist Stelarc, described as the 'quintessential cyborg performance artist'[32], is one such performer who does little to disrupt the patriarchal figurations of post- and transhumanism in the arts.

Stelarc: 'prophet of doom'[33]

Between 1976 and 1988, Stelarc performed over 20 suspension pieces, in various positions, situations and locations, where metal hooks were inserted into his skin, suspending his naked body above the ground in a defiant statement about the obsolescence of the human body, believing it to be a hindrance to our posthuman advancements (fig.1)[34]. Ruth A. Miller argues that these performances cannot be

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[30] Rob Shields, 'Flânerie for Cyborgs', in: Nicholas Gane, ed., 'Annual Review: Explorations of Critical Social Science', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 23, no.7-8, December 2006, 211

[31] Haraway, 1991, 174

[32] Steve Dixon, 'Performance Art', in: Rob Latham, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 266

[33] Ross Farnell, 'Bodies that Speak Science Fiction: Stelarc – Performance Artist 'Becoming Posthuman', in: Andy Sawyer, David Seed, eds., *Speaking Science Fiction: Dialogues and Interpretations*, (Liverpool, UK: Liverpool University Press, 2000a), 120

[34] David Kreps, *Cyborgs: Cyborgism, performance and society*, PhD thesis, (Salford, UK: University of Salford, 2003), 12

called disembodied because there is the presence of a body[35]. However, even though he has ironically rejected this duality[36], Stelarc's brutal disregard for his material flesh enforces the mind/body dichotomy because the body 'becomes an object of dissemination and erasure' that is treated apolitically and asocially, meaning embodied difference becomes irrelevant[37].

What is even more problematic is that Stelarc has aligned himself with Haraway's political framework in order to defend his own patriarchal ideas on the redesigning of the body; he has called for the end of biological birth, wishing, like Nietzsche, to endlessly give birth to himself, claiming this will free mothers from the burden of labour without any regard for the possible desire people may have for childbirth[38]. He has sought to hijack the feminist posthuman agenda even though sexual difference disappears in his vision of subject-as-cyborg; the Other is actively silenced and Stelarc reinstates the phallogocentric history of Neoplatonic Christianity and Western humanism. An ethical posthuman performance art must not forget the importance of the specific conditions of embodiment in order to be radically inclusive and revolutionary[39], and this will be explored in following chapters to determine if and how a progressive posthuman ontology may be manifested through performance.

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[35] Ruth A. Miller, 'Posthuman', in: Catherine R. Stimpson, Gilbert Herdt, eds., *Critical Terms for the Study of Gender*, (Chicago, IL and London, UK: The University of Chicago Press, 2014), 321
[36] Farnell, 2000a, 115
[37] Ibid, 114, 120
[38] Ibid, 122; Ross Farnell, 'In Dialogue with 'Posthuman' Bodies: Interview with Stelarc', in: Mike Featherstone, *Body Modification*, (London, UK et.al.: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2000b), 132, 142; Stelios Arcadiou, 'Earlier Statements', *Stelarc*, n.d., unpaginated: http://stelarc.org/?catID=20317
[39] Parker-Starbuck, op.cit, 20-21, 193-194

'Alternative Visions'[40]: becoming Cyborg

Although Haraway's cyborg ontology is not without its valid criticisms, it seems that Anne Balsamo's contention that the cyborg is merely an 'icon of utopian thought' that will do 'a great disservice to feminism' because 'feminism doesn't need another utopian vision'[41] is unreasonable. Feminism, as a political struggle, is orientated towards the future, one not directly recognisable but envisioned as something that may actively transform society through a dislocation with the present[42]. Utopias can be strategically prophetic in their idealised view of what is not-yet but there is the issue of abstraction and universalization that formulates the utopian vision as a closed system: unchanging, unquestioning and undemocratic[43]. It is perhaps more productive to envision alternative, future visions where the utopian blueprint is lived out in material embodiment, enabling the space for critique through tensions between liberation and oppression as they materialise[44]. Haraway recognised the existing cultural capital of the cyborg when writing her manifesto, acknowledging it as the offspring of patriarchal capitalism and militarism, but emphasised these origins as inessential; the iconography of the cyborg, as historically a figure of potential dystopian socialism, can be transformed through the tactic of appropriation as an intervention against its phallocentric past[45]. The cyborg becomes not a myth of

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[40] Linda Stupart and Tom Dillon, 'For the future struggle: what is science fiction?', *Open Democracy*, (August 2015), unpaginated: https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/for-future-struggle-what-is-science-fiction

[41] Anne Balsamo, 'Reading cyborgs, writing feminism', in: Jenny Wolmark, ed., *Cybersexualities*, (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 153

[42] Grosz, 2004, 260-261

[43] Stupart and Dillon, op.cit, unpaginated

[44] Ibid, unpaginated.

[45] Haraway, 1991, 151; Toye, op.cit, 193

totalitarianism but of multiplicity and difference through the agency and will of its

embodied subjects; it is an 'on-the-ground working project'[46].

It is this *excess* that establishes the cyborg as a site of potential becoming, as

'identity-in-motion'[47]. The philosophical paradigm of becoming, in Deleuze and

Guattari's formulation, denies the 'pure being' of metaphysics in favour of constant

de-/reterritorialisations between bodies, creating new assemblages of subjectivity[48].

Reading Haraway's cyborg alongside Deleuze's nomadic assemblages, as Rosi

Braidotti does in much of her influential posthuman scholarship, can emphasise the

priority of relations over substances[49]. Envisioning the cyborg as made up of

assemblages formed between art, science, and society creates a posthuman ontology

that has the potential of constantly becoming otherwise; it becomes a political

practice, a nomadic body weaving together different lived experiences[50]. Instead of

thinking about the cyborg too literally, like Balsamo and many of the aforementioned

critics, it is more radical to create the cyborg as a tropic figuration, as a performative

and inhabitable image of chimerical vision[51]. For Irigaray and Haraway, who both

create figurations that allow the Other to speak *as that Other*, a revolution of

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[46] Dennis Carlson, *Leaving Safe Harbors: Toward a New Progressivism in American Education and Public Life*, revised ed., (New York, NY and Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2012, first published 2002), 167; Haraway quoted in: Gane, op.cit, 137

[47] B. E. Gibson, 'Disability, Connectivity and Transgressing the Autonomous Body', *Journal of Medical Humanities*, vol.27, no.3, (2006), 190

[48] Dixon, op.cit, 273; Damian Sutton, David Martin-Jones, *Deleuze Reframed: Interpreting Key Thinkers for the Arts*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 11

[49] Rosi Braidotti, 'Posthuman, All Too Human, Towards a New Process of Ontology', in: Nicholas Gane, ed., 'Annual Review: Explorations of Critical Social Science', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 23, no.7-8, (December 2006), 199

[50] Prins, op.cit, 364; Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic subjects*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), 25, 29

[51] Donna Haraway, 1997, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouseTM: Feminism and Technoscience*, (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge), 11; Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* [online], (London, UK and Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 4: http://projectlamar.com/media/harrawayspecies.pdf

aesthetics needs to be involved in ethics to destabilise patriarchal economies of representation that rely on seamless communication[52]. There must be constant tensions between confusion and communication to avoid collapsing back into notions of fixity, and a crucial issue lies in how to preserve a sense of singularity without reinstating a reductive biological essentialism or a disembodied objectivity[53].

Cyborg figurations have proliferated throughout the twentieth century, and with galleries such as Modern Art Oxford and the ICA in London both presenting exhibitions on the relationships between humans and technology this year[54], and the Whitechapel Gallery, also in London, set to present over thirty artists in their landmark exhibition, 'Electronic Superhighway: From Experiments in Art and Technology to Art After the Internet', opening January 2016[55], it is evident that research into technological embodiment is very relevant within contemporary art discourses. The following chapters will examine four female performers who explore ideas of posthumanity within their work to examine the potential of each artistic practice to account for difference, in the vein of Irigaray and Deleuze, within their prophetic visions of a cyborgian future[56]. Very little, if anything, exists on these artists in relevant scholarship and critical reviews of their work may provide new

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[52] Braidotti, 1994, 24; Toye, op.cit, 190; Haraway, 1991, 176

[53] Rosi Braidotti, 'Teratologies', in: Ian Buchanan and Clair Colebrook, eds., *Deleuze and Feminist Theory*, (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press), 2000

[54] Modern Art Oxford, 'Lynn Hershman Leeson: Origins of the Species (Part 2), 30 May – 9 August 2015', n.d., unpaginated: https://www.modernartoxford.org.uk/event/lynn-hershman-leeson-origins-species-part-2/; ICA, 'Looks, 22 Apr 2015 – 21 Jun 2015', n.d., unpaginated: https://www.ica.org.uk/whats-on/seasons/looks

[55] Whitechapel Gallery, 'Electronic Superhighway', n.d., unpaginated: http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/exhibitions/electronic-superhighway/

[56] Although, it must be noted that this is not an exhaustive account and the cyborg must continue through processes of construction and critique to avoid becoming homogenised.

insights into the links between art and technology[57]. The four artists were chosen because they illustrate multiple aspects of Haraway's cyborg ontology; none of the artists directly reference Haraway or Irigaray but happen to travel a similar path of investigation into a socio-political configuration of posthuman embodiment, the examination of which is fruitful for reviewing their ethical philosophies.

boychild (spelt correctly in lowercase[58]) is a Californian performance artist who started performing in San Francisco drag clubs and whose work stems from exploring connections between the human body and technology[59]. Her performances are usually a hybrid of visuals and music, consisting of lip-synching and body movement, used as a 'vocabulary'[60], to convey emotions and narrative. Polly Fibre, similarly, cross-fertilise image and sound. Described as an 'electronic girl band'[61], they explore the prophetic qualities of noise by using craft tools, such as scissors and sewing machines, as their instruments. They also design and create costumes, making specific uniforms and appearing like clones, often making mimetic references to the band Kraftwerk. Uniform is also a significant aspect to the work of Janelle Monáe as a

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[57] It must be stated that such visual analysis relies on recordings of performances that may sometimes be of limited length and quality, restricting any visual analysis specifically to available documentation.
[58] Matthew Stone, 'all about the boychild', *i-D*, (13 November, 2013), unpaginated: https://i-d.vice.com/en_gb/article/all-about-the-boychild
[59] boychild quoted in: Ashleigh Kane, 'Boychild on bending the rules of gender', *Dazed*, (September 2014), unpaginated:
http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/21585/1/boychild-on-bending-the-rules-of-gender; and: Danna Takako, 'boychild's new beauty: Interviewing the "alien" boychild, Hood by Air's favourite performance art radical, *Dazed*, (2014), unpaginated:
http://www.dazeddigital.com/artsandculture/article/17085/1/boychilds-new-beauty
[60] boychild quoted in Michelle Puetz, 'Wu Tsang and boychild in conversation with Michelle Puetz', *Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago*, (August 5, 2014), unpaginated:
http://www2.mcachicago.org/2014/wu-tsang-and-boychild-in-conversation-with-michelle-puetz/
[61] Reading Art, 'Ultra High Temperature#1', (13 October 2010), unpaginated:
https://artreading.wordpress.com/2010/10/13/ultra-high-temperature1/

tribute to the struggles of her working class family[62]. Again, sound is a primary focus of Monáe's work but she differs to the other case studies because she is, first and foremost, a commercial singer and musician. Nevertheless, she is recognised as a contemporary pioneer of Afro-Futurism, creating semi-autobiographical work to examine the oppressive racial and sexual politics in the US[63]. She seeks to subvert patriarchal culture and stereotypes of black, queer women by emphasising her own body as art, and through her android persona Cindi Mayweather, she poses questions about the relationship between humans and potential posthuman Other(s). However, we will first discuss the work of Art Orienté Objet, the French performance duo Marion Laval-Jeantet and Benoît Mangin, whose work creates hybrid relations between humans and animals, the cyborgian threshold most often overlooked in scholarship on Haraway. They often use mixed media and installation to visually emphasise a disruption of fixed categories, in art as well as science, and their momentous performance piece, *May the Horse Live in Me!*, will be the principal focus of the next chapter.

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[62] Ron Moy, *Authorship Roles in Popular Music: Issues and Debates*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 34

[63] Emily J. Lordi, '"Calling All Stars": Janelle Monae's Black Feminist Futures', *the feminist wire,* (September 25, 2013), unpaginated:
http://www.thefeministwire.com/2013/09/calling-all-stars-janelle-monaes-black-feminist-futures/

Chapter Two: Art Orienté Objet

Founded in Paris in 1991, Art Orienté Objet (abbreviated to AOo) create art that raises questions about otherness and animality, with Marion Laval-Jeantet believing 'exchange with the [animal] Other' is 'our reason for being' on earth[1]. They reject the Cartesian worldview, aiming to dislocate mankind from their position of unique isolation in nature[2]. Indeed, their name evokes theories of object-orientated ontology in areas of art theory such as Speculative Realism that 'puts objects, not humans, at the centre of being', subverting the 'existential privilege' of the Copernican Revolution[3]. Haraway's cyborg, unlike the transhumanist ventures to simply expand and enhance humanity, also intends to disrupt fixed ideas of what it means to be human and the implied socio-political entitlements. Instead of a metaphysics that locates humankind over and above other mammals and emphasises the human mind as the ultimate object of knowledge, Haraway hopes that fusions with animals may help us to unlearn how to be Man, that we can actually gain new knowledge from organisms that have historically been made inferior to mankind[4]. AOo and Haraway both view nature as socially constructed, seeking to generate ethical relations with animals through methods that respect them as agents, especially in retaliation against

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[1] AOo quoted in Soizic Quéro, 'Dans les veines de l'artiste coule le sang de cheval', *Centre Presse*, (March 15, 2011), unpaginated: http://www.centre-presse.fr/article-145011-dans-les-veines-de-l-artiste-coule-le-sang-de-cheval.html

[2] Le Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature, 'Communiqué de Presse: Art Orienté Objet au Musée de la Chasse et de la Nature', (September 2013), unpaginated:
http://www.fondationfrancoissommer.org/IMG/pdf/cp_jardin_delices.pdf

[3] Alan C. Braddock, 'From Nature to Ecology: The Emergence of Ecocritical Art History', in: John Davis, et.al., eds, *A Companion to American Art*, (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), 459; Sam Ishii-Gonzales, 'Speculative Realism And The World Without Man', *The Object's Gaze*, (September 2011), unpaginated: https://theobjectsgaze.wordpress.com/2011/09/28/speculative-realism-and-the-world-without-man-2/

[4] Haraway, 1991, 173

projects, such as Oncomouse in the 1980s[5], that both believe scape-goat animals, making them sacrificial victims in the plan to preserve humankind[6].

Such criticism towards animal testing could be controversial, and AOo took these ideas further in their infamous performance *May the Horse Live in Me!*[7] (fig.2) for which they were awarded the 2011 Prix Ars Electronica prize as an example of 'extreme body art', transporting "bioart" to radical new levels[8]. The work was the result of a long-term collaboration between the artists and laboratories in France and Switzerland and, when performed in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2011, consisted of a bio-medical installation and the transfusion of horse blood into Laval-Jeantet's body. Only certain components of the blood were transfused, such as immunoglobulin cells that are responsible for transferring information between organs, because of such high levels of toxins present in horse blood[9]. The performance was high risk and Laval-Jeantet had to prepare for months previous to the event in order to avoid anaphylactic shock[10]. Through an act of role reversal, Laval-Jeantet became the object of scientific research in an attempt to bridge the communication divide between humans and animals, becoming a human Oncomouse and 'a female version of the centaur'[11], as a statement of inter-species empathy[12].

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[5] Oncomouse, injected with the oncogene, was used for cancer research purposes in the late 1980s, see: Neil Gerlach, et.al, *Becoming Biosubjects: Bodies. Systems. Technology.* [online], (Toronto, Canada, et.al.: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2011), unpaginated: https://books.google.co.uk

[6] Andy Miah, 'Posthumanism: A Critical History', in: B. Gordijn, & R. Chadwick, eds., *Medical Enhancements & Posthumanity*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2007), 8: http://ieet.org/archive/2007.04.12-MiahChapter2.pdf; Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 104, 106

[7] artorienteobjet, 'May the Horse Live in me.mov', online video clip, *YouTube*, (May 20, 2011), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx_E4DUWXbE

[8] Prix Ars, 'May the Horse Live in me, 2011', (2011), unpaginated: http://prix2011.aec.at/winner/3043/

[9] Aleksandra Hirszfeld, 'May the Horse Live in me (interview with Art Orienté Objet)', *Art+Science Meeting*, (2012), unpaginated: http://artandsciencemeeting.pl/?page_id=306&lang=en;

[10] Laval-Jeantet quoted in: Ibid, unpaginated

[11] Cyril Thomas, 'Art Orienté Objet : « J'ai ressenti dans mon corps la nature très vive du cheval »', *poptronics*, (March 31, 2009), unpaginated: http://www.poptronics.fr/Art-Oriente-Objet-J-ai-ressenti;

This desire for cross-species communication is emphasised by the performance's aesthetic qualities. The horse, from which blood is extracted at the start of the performance, remains on stage throughout the event and is black in colour; Laval-Jeantet, similarly, remains on stage and is dressed in black, visually mirroring the horse. After the transfusion, Laval-Jeantet embraces the animal and is dressed in prosthetic horse legs, becoming the horse's 'alter ego' and '[adopting] his race'[13], where they perform a 'communication ritual'[14] by walking alongside one another around the gallery space (fig.3). Her hybridised blood is then extracted and preserved as 'centaur's blood'[15], representing a subversion of the centaur myth, historically envisioned as 'hyper-masculine' creatures[16] (fig.4.). Centaurs, like Haraway's cyborg, tested the boundaries between nature and culture but, as 'an exclusively male species'[17], sexual difference was not accounted for in their ontology. Similarly to Nietzsche's mentions of Greek mythological satyr's in 'The Birth of Tragedy', the human/animal hybrid embraced the earth and immanence, feeling for humanity and nature rather than seeking escape or redemption from earth[18]. However, as examined in chapter one, Irigaray criticised these transvaluations for erasing sexual difference in

Hirszfeld, op.cit, unpaginated; Perrine Clément 'Marion Laval-Jeantet and Benoît Mangin (Art Orienté Objet)', *Fondation Entreprise Ricard*, (2013), unpaginated:
http://www.fondation-entreprise-ricard.com/en/Conferences/view/83-marion-laval-jeantet-et-benoit-mangin-art-oriente-objet-perrine-clement

[12] Ibid, unpaginated

[13] Quéro, op.cit, unpaginated

[14] Biofaction, 'Art Orienté objet: Que le cheval vive en moi', (April 20, 2011), unpaginated: http://www.biofaction.com/synth-ethic/?p=63

[15] Hirszfeld, op.cit, unpaginated

[16] Page DuBois, *Centaurs and Amazons: Women and the Pre-history of the Great Chain of Being*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), 31

[17] Ibid, 32

[18] Adrian Del Caro, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth*, (Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co, 2004), 72-73

their desire to give birth to the (male) same[19]. Laval-Jeantet's mimetic reference to the centaur disrupts the historical male ontology and creates new spaces for sexual multiplicity through a 'becoming in relation'[20] to the horse as an alternative Other. The ritual between woman and horse becomes a material representation of Irigaray's "interval", where the artist mimes the horse's identity in order to alter her perception and understanding of the animal, creating possibilities for an ethical relationship between the two[21].

Due to the nature of live performance, a relationship was also created between the performers and the audience; due to the controversial and hazardous nature of the work, political issues raised by the performance were intensified through the unsettling 'experience of strangeness', which the artists hoped would provoke the viewer to question their own perception of species boundaries and 'ecosystem diversity'[22]. The performance did not include any audio and much of it was performed in silence, emphasising the gestural relationship between artist and horse, the absence of spoken language dislocating human verbal communication from being the principal carrier of knowledge and information. The creation of a new language between human and horse, in their ritualistic embrace, subverts the reproduction of an anthropocentric history emphasising, as Irigaray does, the importance of touch for expressing love for the Other[23].

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[19] Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*. Gillian C. Gill, trans., (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1991), 175

[20] Toye, op.cit, 187

[21] Ibid, 187

[22] Marika Prévosto, 'Art Orienté objet, Performance Que le cheval vive en moi!', *ArtCatalyse*, (2011), unpaginated: http://www.artcatalyse.com/performance-art-oriente-objet-que-le-cheval-vive-en-moi.html

[23] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex which is Not One*, Catherine Porter, trans., (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 205-218

Touch is also an important aspect of a later work titled *Pieta Australiana* (2011, fig.5), which is a photograph depicting Laval-Jeantet cradling a dead kangaroo by the roadside, both human and animal mimicking historical Pieta iconography from religious painting, such as Giovanni Bellini's *Pieta Martinengo* (c.1505, fig.6). Laval-Jeantet is dressed in blue to visually mimic the Virgin's blue mantle and, because of the image's clear reference to religious iconography, the grass on which the artist is kneeling echoes the hortus conclusus symbolic of Mary's divine purity, both portrayed by Bellini[24]. However, there is no enclosed garden or flowering plants in AOo's photograph, the innocence associated with the original iconography disrupted by the blurred presence of a speeding car, conveying the potential threats manmade technologies pose for organisms, the vulnerability of the kangaroo emphasised through its visual connection to the dead Christ as the scapegoat.

Inspired by the writings of René Girard, AOo explore the idea of the scapegoat mechanism in their work, another example being their sculpture of an impaled taxidermy lamb, *Le Tout Autre* (2008, fig.7), which mirrors the iconography of the Mystic Lamb in Jan van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* (1432, fig.8)[25]. These works challenge the marginalisation of animals within the ecosystem by the anthropocentric Cartesian worldview that locates consciousness, and therefore true being, within the human[26]. Through touch and love of the animal Other, AOo aim to create new

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[24] Lucia Impelluso, *Nature and its Symbols*, J. Paul Getty Trust, trans., (Los Angeles, CA: Getty Publications, 2004), 12

[25] parisART, 'Art Orienté Objet, La peau de l'autre: Communiqué de presse,' (2008), unpaginated:http://www.paris-art.com/exposition-art-contemporain/la-peau-de-l-autre/art-oriente-objet-/3665.html

[26] Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* [online], (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2004), unpaginated: https://books.google.co.uk

pathways of knowledge in their affinity with nonhuman organisms, going as far as to visually convey Laval-Jeantet as the grieving cyborg mother of the sacrificed road kill, a disturbing 'tight coupling' referencing taboos of bestiality and zoophilia examined in Haraway's cyborg myth[27].

Even though AOo and Haraway raise important questions about the perception and treatment of animals through the creation of new hybridised communication, one must question how these works are able to respect nonhuman organisms as agents if consent can never be verbalised. Haraway's mention of a new cyborgian 'marriage exchange'[28], whilst one presumes not meaning literal marriage, becomes dangerously close to reinforcing humankind as the dominant species because animals cannot verbally confirm their desires or needs. Neither the horse nor the kangaroo can express consent, and they arguably become objectified pawns in the AOo's political agenda. A level of cyborgian privilege was created in the performance *May the Horse Live in Me!* because, after the performance, the horse was immediately escorted from the gallery, restricting any interaction with the animal to the select group present on stage (fig.9). Moreover, due to the biomedical risks involved, the performance can also never be repeated[29], thus limiting the work to those who have the health and opportunities to undergo a 'blood-brotherhood'[30] with other organisms. Their prophetic utterances of ethical interspecies relationships are reduced to Daly's concept of patriarchal prophecies, the artist's representing gifted individuals that visualise a posthuman future only available to a select few.

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[27] Haraway, 1991, 152
[28] Ibid, 152
[29] Fundación Telefónica, 'May the horse live in me', n.d., unpaginated:
http://vida.fundaciontelefonica.com/en/project/may-the-horse-live-in-me/
[30] Biofaction, op.cit, unpaginated

Furthermore, and perhaps most crucially, AOo never mention gender politics, even though they consist of a male and female duo. The fact sexual difference is not mentioned, and because they view animals as the other to humans, their prophetic visions do not claim an embodied ontology of difference; the body becomes universalised and gender neutral reinforcing the hierarchical dualism of human/animal. Otherness becomes solely projected onto the marginalisation of animals, ignoring the very real oppressions lived by different groups of people. Haraway's cyborg metaphor suggests a mutation from the association of women with nature and men with science and technology[31], yet Laval-Jeantet is often the lead performer. An affinity between male/animal is not explored in these works, leaving Mangin in the place of disembodied God-like genius that uses Laval-Jeantet as, in the words of Irigaray, his 'vessel' for meaning; she is subsumed by man in order to give the true Other, the animal, potential signification[32]. Therefore, in this cyborg ontology, although the transhumanist focus on the superiority of humankind is disrupted through an affinity with animals, by simply inverting the Copernican worldview and placing objects at the centre of being instead of humans, the importance of embodied difference is ultimately ignored.

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[31] Scott Jeffery, *Superhuman, Transhuman, Post/Human: Mapping the Production and Reception of the Posthuman Body*, PhD Thesis, (Stirling, Scotland: University of Stirling, 2013), 29: https://dspace.stir.ac.uk/bitstream/1893/19464/1/finalthesis.pdf

[32] Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill, trans., (London and New York, NY: Continuum, 2004 edition), 32

Chapter Three: boychild

boychild, a female performance artist from California, often comments on the influence technology has on her work. As someone who is 'convinced that humans are cyborgs' because 'we have more avatars than real-life experiences', her work explores human/technology relationships through the character of boychild, an imagined figure physically embodied in the artist's performance work[1]. Furthermore, boychild self-identifies as a queer woman of colour[2], but this research does not build on Haraway's assertion that women of colour are inherently a cyborg identity. Although Haraway recognises the many 'complex political-historical layerings' of such an identity, those identifying with this term must be respected as agents or we risk falling back into issues of second-wave feminism that failed to recognise lived experiences of non-white women[3]; the cyborg's 'racial body politics have a long way to go'[4] and some women of colour may not want to become cyborgian in Haraway's sense, whilst others, like boychild, may see it as an opportunity to express identities that often go unrepresented in dominant economies of representation.

Initially boychild started performing in drag spaces and clubs where she would lip-synch and move to popular music and remixes, and she has commented on the importance of underground nightlife for contextualising her work as a more

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[1] boychild quoted in: Takako, op.cit, unpaginated

[2] Philomena Epps, ''The social media generation': finding artistic subjectivity within digital culture', *Imperica*, (May 18, 2015), unpaginated: https://www.imperica.com/en/features/the-social-media-generation-finding-artistic-subjectivity-within-digital-culture

[3] Haraway, 1991, 174; Lorraine Code, ed., *Encyclopedia of Feminist Theories*, (London, UK and New York, NY: 2000), 57

[4] González, op.cit, 278

'spontaneous' experience[5]. Recently she has been gaining an increasing amount of recognition in the commercial art world; she performed both solo and collaboratively with Matthew Stone at Art Basel 2013 and was included in the ICA's 'Looks' exhibition earlier this year as part of Wu Tsang's video *A Day in the Life of Blis* (2014). These, as well as her lip-synch performances, will be the key works discussed in this chapter, exploring boychild's use of her body as an expression of cyborg subjectivity[6].

boychild is said to 'explore notions of subculture and alternative social structures' as a way to subvert heteronormative and white supremacist systems of power[7], and her lip-synch works, performed at clubs and festivals, are an example of a de/resignification of performance art away from the 'limbolike' alienation of the white cube and into an indeterminate space[8]. At Canada's 'Rifflandia Festival' in 2013, boychild performed *#untitledlipsync 1, 2 and 3*[9], confronting the omnipresence of the social human body with the spectacle of the body-as-flesh (fig.10). Her work plays with notions of commercial performance, the festival context emphasising the theatricality of her work. She lip-synched to Cyril Hahn's remix of 'Say My Name' by Destiny's Child, the original R&B song modified into a dark, electronic version, the voices distorted and made other; the original pitch of the voices is lowered, and they become

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[5] boychild quoted in: Hili Perlson, 'Truth in Gender: Wu Tsang and boychild on the question of queerness', *sleek*, (October 29, 2014), unpaginated: http://www.sleek-mag.com/print-features/2014/10/truth-in-gender-wu-tsang-and-boychild-on-the-question-of-queerness/

[6] The analysis of performances relies on recorded material and because boychild's performances are sometimes repeated, in contrast to AOo's singular performance, the documentation analysed is bound to its specific temporal and spatial context.

[7] Epps, op.cit, unpaginated

[8] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* [online], (San Francisco, CA: The Lapis Press, 1986), 47, 52: http://monoskop.org/images/8/8e/ODoherty_Brian_Inside_the_White_Cube_The_Ideology_of_the_Gallery_Space.pdf

[9] RifflandiaTV, 'Rifflandia 2013- Boychild', online video clip, *YouTube*, (September 17, 2013): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mTlVosk4bQ

resignified as a deeper, potentially male-sounding voice, but ultimately they become voices with no bodily origin. A double resignification is created in performing these lip-synchs, firstly by abstracting and distorting the voice from its origin, and secondly (re)presenting it on stage. boychild becomes like Haraway's 'figures', an inhabitable 'performative image' that subverts identifications and certainties by way of displacement; her cyborgian performances explore the tensions between self/other, always 'becoming in relation' through the mediation between herself and other bodies, projecting a voice that isn't hers as a way to disrupt ideas of fixed origins and identities[10].

Although boychild stresses that gender isn't part of her work, her body in *#untitledlipsync*, often half naked and covered in makeup, becomes 'a collation of de-feminised parts', recomposed through her glitching movements and miming[11]. Lighting is used as a visual language to evoke emotions, accentuating the dichotomy of verbal language versus body language, the strobe lights in her mouth and hands emphasising the juxtaposition between her gestural body and the mimed voice (fig.11)[12]. Braidotti speaks of conceptual personas as 'materially embodied stages of metamorphosis', bringing that which escapes consciousness into symbolic representation[13]; by juxtaposing the lived body and the performing *of* that body through technological staging, boychild's audio/visual performances fluctuate between reality and fiction, subverting patriarchal significations of the female body in its continual de/reconstruction. During her solo performance at the MoMA PS1 Party

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[10] Haraway, 1997, 11; Toye, op.cit, 187

[11] boychild quoted in: Kane, op,cit, unpaginated; Tom Coles, 'Arika 2013: Confronting Us As Flesh', *Glasgow Review of Books*, (August 12, 2013), unpaginated: http://glasgowreviewofbooks.com/2013/08/12/arika-2013-confronting-us-as-flesh/

[12] boychild quoted in: Kane, op.cit, unpaginated and Perlson, op.cit, unpaginated

[13] Braidotti, 2000, 171

at Art Basel 2013, she writhed around to music, half naked, on a platform covered in

blue and red paint (fig.12), visually evoking Yves Klein's infamous performance

Anthropométrie de l'époque bleue (1960, fig.13) where, under Klein's direction,

naked female models covered in Klein Blue paint imprinted their bodies on white

paper[14]. boychild destabilised the objectifying and heteronormative position of

Klein's piece into one of nomadic fluidity. She was the object of the audience's gaze

but evaded their control as she moved erratically and freely across the stage; the

purity of the blue paint becoming desecrated as it mixed with the red, her body

refused to create a fixed imprint on the platform surface as it unfolded temporally and

spatially, fluctuating between the 'no longer' and the 'not yet'[15].

boychild also performed in Matthew Stone's *Love Focused Like a Laser*[16] for Art

Basel 2013, a twenty minute 'hybrid opera' that commenced with the declaration that

"God is here" as boychild and singer Kelela acted out a Pieta scene and Stone, taking

to the stage like a priest, spurted proclamations about love and spirituality (figs. 14

and 15)[17]. However, one must question how radical Stone's prophecies can be in such

a commercialised spectacle; the performers, all styled in clothing by Hood By Air,

became walking advertisements for designer fashions, expressing, as opera

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[14] Kisa Lala, 'Boychild Performance at Art Basel Miami Beach 2013 Delano Hotel', online video clip, *YouTube*, December 21, 2013: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_gKpl6cRyk; Lynda Nead, *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality*, (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 73
[15] Braidotti, 2006, 206
[16] Matthew Stone, 'Love Focused Like a Laser', online video clip, *YouTube*, (December 16, 2013): www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOxX6cFZJnk
[17] Sarah Nicole Prickett, 'Art Matters | Amid the Cynicism of Art Basel, an Oasis of Sincerity', *NY Times*, (9 December 2013): http://tmagazine.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/12/09/art-matters-amid-the-cynicism-of-art-basel-an-oasis-of-sincerity/?_r=0; Kalvin Lazarte, 'Art Basel: Love Focused Like A Laser', *Milk Made*, (December 5, 2013), unpaginated: http://www.milkmade.com/articles/2400-Art-Basel-Love-Focused-Like-A-Laser#.Vc7_RSxViko

traditionally has, the emergence of the 'superior middle-class individual'[18]. boychild's

sudden resurrection after Stone's speech and revelatory victory dance on top of a

floating platform in the venue's swimming pool became an expression of art's saving

power, but the utopic optimism coupled with Christian symbolism portrayed boychild

as an 'ideal transcendental saviour figure' (fig.16)[19], a post-gender Übermensch clad

in designer clothing at risk of not only commodifying the cyborg myth, but making

the ideological mistake of erasing embodied struggles in the search for a 'seamless,

friction-free becoming'[20]. Although God is projected as a sexed, embodied subject,

reflecting Irigaray's theory of the sensible transcendental, the work risks reinforcing

the patriarchal ideal of the goddess as boychild was isolated centre stage, represented

as a fetishized figure of salvation, a 'model of' and a 'model for' a female

spirituality[21].

boychild was also featured in Wu Tsang's two-channel video *A Day in the Life of*

Bliss[22] exhibited at the ICA earlier this year, which was set in a near-future, post-

human world[23]. Again, boychild, as protagonist Bliss, plays a heroine figure,

represented as a potential saviour against the totalitarian LOOKS social media

platform that feed on her character's visibility as a pop-culture celebrity but, in

contrast to Stone's utopic piece, there are constant tensions between liberation and

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[18] Susan McClary, 'Afterword: The Politics of Silence and Sound' in: Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* [online]*,* Brian Massumi, trans., (Minneapolis, MN and London, UK: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), 155:
http://monoskop.org/images/6/67/Attali_JacquesNoise_The_Political_Economy_of_Music.pdf
[19] Cook, op,cit, 7
[20] Haraway quoted in: Gane, op.cit, 2006
[21] Hewitt, op.cit, 145
[22] wutsang, 'A day in the life of bliss – 2-Channel Video Installation', online video clip, *Vimeo*, (2014): https://vimeo.com/100686105
[23] Pip Wallis, '*looks @* ica reviewed', *aqnb*, (May 7, 2015), unpaginated:
http://www.aqnb.com/2015/05/07/looks-ica-reviewed/

oppression throughout the narrative[24]. Although this work is not a live performance, there are several parts of the film where boychild performs movement pieces to convey different emotional states, the two-channelling of the video allowing for juxtapositions between verbal and body language, as well as reality and fiction (fig.17).

The work is a discussion about the panoptical fetishisation of surveillance, ultimately portraying the underground scene as a place of solace and freedom in its resistance against governmental regimes of systematic power[25]. boychild has discussed the difference between performing at clubs and grander events like festivals, stating the latter involves stricter 'boundaries in the dynamics' between artist and viewer because of larger audiences. In clubs, the artist can perform on the floor and 'on the same level' as the viewer, both experiencing and embodying the situation as it unfolds[26]. These different spatial contexts raise questions about accessibility and affinity within performance and perhaps illustrate a need for more radical transgressions in culturally coded spaces in order to establish both physical and metaphorical 'fields of difference'[27].

From discussing these various performative works it is arguable that the most radical performances are those when boychild presents herself as a form and force that cannot be consumed as a functional commodity, avoiding presenting cyborgian ontology as a fashion and running the risk of reducing the political importance of the cyborg to a

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[24] Melissa Haizlip, 'A Day In The Life Of Bliss: About', *Bliss Mov*, n.d., unpaginated: http://www.blissmov.com/about/
[25] Ibid, unpaginated
[26] boychild quoted in: Perlson, op.cit, unpaginated
[27] Haraway, 1991, 162

purely materialistic style[28]. In remembering the importance of embodied experience within Haraway's cyborg ontology, it must also be remembered that favouring the physicality of the body over the play of tensions between body and mind ultimately reinforces the hierarchical dichotomy the myth seeks to subvert. In the face of art that aims to either discard the body, or treat it as a homogenous category like AOo, boychild uses body movement to express emotions and construct identity as the work unfolds in time and space. Although boychild states her work is not about gender, she rejects any assertions that she is androgynous, and does not identify as a man 'in any way'[29]. It is simply because boychild refuses to conform to patriarchal, capitalist ideals of the female body that she gets classed as androgynous. Haraway rejects androgyny as an ideal because it implies that a post-gender future must sacrifice gender altogether instead of challenging the male/female binary as a culturally coded norm. Surrendering gender is a false liberation that would erase sexual difference from posthuman prophecies, and the material reality of women's bodies would go unrepresented[30]. boychild disrupts the heteronormative gaze through a desexualisation of the female body in her performances, presenting her naked flesh as a site for identity construction and often appropriating references to popular culture to further subvert dominant ideologies of a female ideal.

In Stone's work she became a cyborgian goddess that simply inverted the universal identity of God the Father, preaching a pseudo-transcendence in line with the focus on

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[28] Carolee Schneeman quoted in Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz, ed., *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art, A source book of Artists' Writings*, (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1996), 683

[29] boychild quoted in: Takako, op.cit, unpaginated; 'Her androgynous physique' quoted from Julia Stoschek Collection, 'Wu Tsang: A Day In The Life Of Bliss', n.d., unpaginated: http://www.julia-stoschek-collection.net/en/exhibitions/past/wu-tsang-a-day-in-the-life-of-bliss.html,

[30] Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 105-107

human enhancement in Transhumanism, whereas in the other works there exists the disruptive tensions and struggles that explore visions of both utopic and dystopic existence. These polarisations allow for the emergence of contradiction and trips in communication, providing a break, an Irigarian 'interval', which creates space for difference and multiplicity within the cyborg ontology[31]. Furthermore, by performing in such a variety of spaces, such as clubs, festivals, galleries and fashion shows, boychild establishes a multi-discourse nature to her performance art, forming an artistic 'nomadism'[32] that generates potentially contradictory registers between the bodies in different locations. The work destabilises fixity and enables her cyborg politics to remain in a state of becoming through relations with such varied audiences.

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[31] Toye, op.cit, 187
[32] Braidotti, 2006, 201

Chapter Four: Polly Fibre

Started as a 'solo sonic-sewing act' by Reading based artist Christine Ellison, Polly Fibre is an electronic band that 'engages haptically' with the language of fashion to explore 'fashions of language', their performed installations portraying machines as vital aspects of embodiment[1]. Usually consisting of three or four band members, Polly Fibre investigate the potential 'prophetic power of music' by adapting dressmaking tools into sonic instruments. They play with tensions between the analogue and the digital, seeking to deconstruct culturally coded symbols of virtual media to produce radically new languages of sound technology[2]. Although they have not yet stated an explicit affiliation with posthuman discourses, their symbiosis with technologies has a strong connection to the cyborg image[3]. Moreover, their use of costume and band aesthetics is arguably a strong reference to the all male electronic group Kraftwerk who are known for their prophetic visions of the posthuman as 'The Man-Machine'[4], therefore this chapter's analysis will investigate into how Polly Fibre construct a posthuman identity through their hybrid performances and mimetic references to subvert disembodied human/technology ideals.

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[1] Ellison quoted in: John Lambert, 'Polly Fibre', *Relay*, (n.d.), unpaginated: http://www.relayproject.com/pollyfibre.html; Sinéad Gleeson, 'Musical Rooms Part 46: Polly Fibre', *Musical Rooms*, (October 21, 2008), unpaginated: https://musicalrooms.wordpress.com/2008/10/21/musical-rooms-part-46-polly-fibre/

[2] Ellison quoted in: Agency of Noise, 'A Day and Night of Noise Cabaret', (December 13, 2012), unpaginated: https://agencyofnoise.wordpress.com/2012/12/13/the-prophetic-sound-a-day-and-night-of-noise-cabaret/; Gleeson, op.cit, unpaginated

[3] Bianca Westermann, 'Meeting the Other: Cyborgs, Aliens, and Beyond', in: Ulrike küchler, et. al., *Alien Imaginations: Science Fiction and Tales of Transnationalism*, (New York, NY, et.al: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 147; Haraway, 1991, 176

[4] Simon Reynolds, Joy Press, *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion, and Rock 'n' Roll*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 103-105

The performance *Craftwork* (2006), both in the title and content, makes the most explicit reference to Kraftwerk's live performances of 'The Man-Machine', a posthuman figure envisioned as genderless, neutralising sexual difference and reinforcing transhumanist theories of disembodied objectivity, the pseudo-transcendence of gender aligning with patriarchal prophecies of worldly escape[5]. At concerts, the four musicians often stand uniformly behind individual mixing desks in front of a large screen displaying various song lyrics in black, white and red lights[6] (fig.18). Polly Fibre employ a similar staging but subvert the sleek, high production value through the hybridity of both digital and analogue technologies, as well as using visual symbols instead of words to communicate with the audience. In the version of *Craftwork* performed at Area 10 in London[7], four women stood on stage with tables and mixing desks in front of a large video projection of giant silhouettes of irons and close-up shots of dressmaking tools and icons (fig.19). The similar use of black, white and red colours in the projections of domestic objects dislocated the 'superhuman grace' of Kraftwerk's idealised posthuman world. They use their tools, with microphones attached, not only to create sounds but to fashion a dress corresponding to the dressmaking patterns projected behind them (fig.20); the intangible sound is generated through the material process of creating a physical object, one that is culturally coded as worn on the female body, thus intertwining the prophetic power of immaterial sound with the very real presence of female embodiment.

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[5] Reynolds, op.cit, 103

[6] Cleckesbco, 'Kraftwerk – The Man-Machine [Live, 2004] HD', online video clip, *YouTube*, (September 24, 2012): www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eWny2ZLCwU

[7] Polly Fibre, 'Craftwork', online video clip, *Pollyfibre*, n.d.: http://www.pollyfibre.com/index.php?/project/craftwork/

Moreover, the close-up of the bobbin on the projection appears like a bullet chamber (fig.21), the violence of such an object emphasised by the screeching sounds and the red thread visible through the bobbin holes, potentially symbolic of flesh and blood, but also visually referencing the shirts Kraftwerk wore on their 'Man-Machine' album cover (fig.22). Polly Fibre have symbolically wound the red fabric back into the bobbin and created something new in their performance. The piercing audio created a tense, ominous atmosphere, subverting a symbol of domesticity and craft into one of intimidating threat, playing with the malleability of images in contrast to the Kraftwerk's projections of song lyrics. Similarly to Irigaray in her critique of Nietzsche[8], Polly Fibre has taken 'The Man-Machine' as Übermensch and transvalued its denial of gender into one of embodied difference through subverting Kraftwerk's universalised, metaphysical language into one of materially and culturally bound iconography.

The group mimic cultural expectations of femininity to pose questions about making woman into 'an object, a category, a sign'[9], and in *Prêt-à-Médiatiser* (Dublin, 2011; Chicago, 2012) Polly Fibre disrupt notions of the fashion catwalk to investigate the paradoxes between the presence of the body in fashion, and the absence of individual identity through its objectification[10]. The 'choreographed fashion show' involved a series of models wearing large cut-out shapes on their faces and bodies, walking sideways across the stage to methodical noises of bangs and scrapes produced by their

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[8] Ansell-Pearson, op.cit, 20

[9] Forte, op.cit, 253

[10] Polly Fibre, 'Prêt-à-Médiatiser', online video clip, *Pollyfibre*, n.d.:
http://www.pollyfibre.com/index.php?/projects/pret-a-mediatiser/; Ellison quoted in: Tales Frey, '"Prêt-À-Médiatiser" Em Cinco Perguntas E Incontáveis Reflexões', *Performatus*, (November 2012), unpaginated: http://performatus.net/pret-a-mediatiser

microphoned dressmaking tools[11] (fig.23). The flat, two-dimensional dresses, made from collaged 'software interfaces and magazine pages'[12] contrasted with the three-dimensional nature of the human body posed questions about the subject/object relationships on the catwalk, the seductive confidence of the invisible bodies creating tensions between passive objectification and a working agency. The juxtaposition between the digital and the man-made fashions the work as a contemporary commentary on the production of identity in an information age through an affinity with 'technological "others" on stage', the bodies competing for the audience's attention against the intrusive nature of their 'mediatised counterparts'[13].

Kraftwerk's only reference to women on 'The Man-Machine' album is in the song 'The Model', portraying a condescending image of a female who is 'all body and no soul'; the men only care about how she looks, reducing female presence to one of pure physicality, making her an empty vessel to satisfy the pleasure of their patriarchal gaze[14]. Kraftwerk make no space for an embodied female identity and creativity in their posthuman vision and the hidden faces of the models and over exaggeration of the female form in *Prêt-à-Médiatiser* does radicalise preconceptions of the catwalk through tensions between nature/technology. However, the work ultimately does little to dislocate Western beauty ideals because the paper outfits were an over powering presence on stage, reducing the female body to this two dimensionality, the prevailing repetition of movement and sound stratifying the

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[11] Una Mullally, 'Prêt-à-médiatiser', *Irish Times*, (2011), unpaginated:
http://www.irishtimes.com/blogs/festival-hub/2011/09/17/pret-a-mediatiser/
[12] Ellison quoted in: Pollyfibre, 'Prêt-à-Médiatiser', n.d., unpaginated:
http://www.pollyfibre.com/index.php?/projects/pret-a-mediatiser/
[13] Parker-Satrbuck, op.cit, 45, 51
[14] Reynolds, op.cit, 103; 'She is looking good, for beauty we will pay' quoted from Kraftwerk, 'The Model', *The Man-Machine*, (Düsseldorf, Germany: Kling Klang, 1978):
http://www.lyricsdepot.com/kraftwerk/the-model.html

components of the work into a cultural code of unchanging technological identity. Similarly to criticisms of Vanessa Beecroft's work that, even whilst exposing the socio-political constructions of Western beauty ideals her performances 'underscore the essential bodily sameness' of the performers, Polly Fibre also become a 'surrogate figure'[15] of patriarchal culture by failing to radically reconceptualise female, post-digital identity as one of bodily difference.

Arguably, Polly Fibre's more subversive performances are those that emphasise the importance of, and the physicality of making, sound as a communication tool; the juxtaposition between its immateriality and the materiality of the body involved in its production during live performances invents new codes of information, the language of noise being created at the same time as its meaning[16]. Like boychild, Polly Fibre have performed in galleries as well as clubs and festivals, allowing for their interrogation into the language of sound to register in different culturally coded spaces, the juxtaposition between their crude 'post-digital' noise and either the transcendent isolation of the gallery space, or the commercialised pop-culture sounds of clubs and festivals, fragmenting clear lines of communication between bodies and environments[17]. The 'infinite regress of repetition' seen in *Prêt-à-Médiatiser* must be reappropriated to escape the eternal return of the (male) same propagated by artists like Stelarc and Kraftwerk.

This reappropriation can be seen in *Live Cut* (2013, fig.24), part of 'The Prophetic Sound' event at The Cavendish Ballroom in London. It was a performance involving

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[15] Henry M. Sayre, '1990-2005: In the Clutches of Time', in: Amelia Jones, ed., *A Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945*, (Oxford, UK, et.al.: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd, 2006), 109
[16] Attali, op.cit, 134
[17] Lambert, co.cit, unpaginated; Gleeson, op.cit, unpaginated

three of Polly Fibre creating sounds by scratching and cutting pieces of material with their microphoned tools. The material was eventually manufactured into nine circular, pseudo-vinyl discs for collectors, fashioned as material relics of the live music produced but rendered unplayable and functionally useless (fig.25)[18]. Carl Delver recalls how, at times, the sound would take on a musical structure only to quickly break down again into formless noise[19]. Noise is an important creative 'trope' in Haraway's cyborg myth as it generates trips and stutters in communication, the potential failings of these breakdowns allowing bodies to get somewhere they weren't before[20]. Polly Fibre mimic the processes of playing and recording commercial music, but employ 'structural mutations' and produce unusable artefacts to present sound as 'an end in itself', fighting the disembodied objectivity of music by making performance a vital component of the work[21]. Both performers and audience were simultaneously consumers and producers of the work as it was created in real time; the sound became a Deleuzian assemblage as it's temporal unfolding established multiple entryways and dimensions to its meaning, refusing notions of wholeness and unity[22].

Their multimedia performances emphasise that nature and technology are not oppositional forces, but that our relationship to objects can subvert cultural constructs of the body through a breakdown in the human/technology threshold[23]. The use of

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[18] Carl Delver, 'The Prophetic Sound', *a-n The Artists Information Company*, (February 11, 2013), unpaginated: http://www.a-n.co.uk/p/2975447#_ftn1

[19] Ibid, unpaginated

[20] Haraway quoted in: Gane, op.cit, 152

[21] Attali, op.cit, 135; McClary, op.cit, 158

[22] Jasmina Sermijn, Patrick Devliger and Gerrit Loots, 'The Narrative Construction of the Self: Selfhood as a Rhizomatic Story', *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol,14, no.4, (2008), 637.

[23] Dixon, op.cit, 271; David Tomas, 'Art, Psychasthenic Assimilation and the Cybernetic Automaton', in: Chris Hables Gray (ed.), *The Cyborg Handbook*, (London, UK: Routledge, 1995), 256-262

domestic materials subverts the alienated autonomy of the gallery and the collective

emotionality of the club and festival scenes through the juxtaposition of the spectacle

with the everyday; Polly Fibre perform and embody domesticated technologies of

craft traditionally associated with women, such as sewing and pattern cutting, in order

to listen, literally, to their potential 'other' meanings[24]. Their uniform appearances,

adopted in every performance, often including wigs, masks, high heels and hand-

made paper dresses, could arguably be viewed as a regressive inversion of

Kraftwerk's clone-like aesthetic or presenting the female body as a caricature that

fails to represent an embodiment of gendered difference. However, their 'excessive

mimicry'[25] of feminine stereotypes, particularly the commercialised "girl band"

image, also serves to destabilise their ideological power; concealed behind the

costumes, the performer's invisibility becomes the condition of 'a new kind of

visibility' that creates an intervention on the cultural capital of Kraftwerk's

'androgyne Man-Machine'[26].

Whereas Kraftwerk's cyborg prophecy mimics human life but ultimately remains

outside it through their 'Apollonian aesthetic', creating a vision of a genderless utopia

of disembodied mind/technology hybrids[27], Polly Fibre establish a cyborg ontology

that fluctuates between nature and culture. Although it is significant that their work

risks reinforcing the idea that women can have 'no signification without men', they

try to make space for sexual difference in cyborg performance by assuming and

mimicking the female "Other"[28]. Yet, in *Prêt-à-Médiatiser* the female body was

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[24] O'Doherty, op.cit, 52; Coles, op.cit, unpaginated; Ansell-Pearson, op.cit, 20
[25] Carlson, op.cit, 189
[26] Tomas, op.cit, 261; Reynolds, op.cit, 103
[27] Ibid, 103-105
[28] Short, op.cit, 84; Irigaray, 1991, 175

reduced to sheer form through its dislocation from embodiment; both the noise and the movement of the models were methodical and orderly, generating an endless 'recurring circle of repetition'[29] that rejects possibilities for difference. In performances like *Craftwork* and *Live Cut*, however, the constant play of tensions between dualisms such as immaterial/material, music/noise, digital/analogue, collaged together with their ironic femininity constructs a cyborg ontology through affinity and mediation between organic and technological others on stage. Polly Fibre underlines the prophetic power of sound by disrupting the commercialisation of music and juxtaposing structural sequences with formless, chaotic noise, interplaying Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetics[30], disrupting perfect lines of communication between bodies and generating dynamic intervals of multiplicity and difference.

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[29] Ansell-Pearson, op.cit, 68

[30] 'Apollonian form... Dionysian chaos' quoted in: Rose Pfeffer, *Nietzsche: Disciple of Dionysus*, (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, Inc., 1972), 61

Chapter Five: Janelle Monáe

Janelle Monáe, an American singer/songwriter, differs from the previous case studies because she is a commercial recording artist and may not be considered a performance artist as her work has commodity and entertainment value[1]. In comparison to the 'unpossessable' sounds of Polly Fibre, Monáe's music has exchange value, which Attali claims makes the artist a stranger to their own work through its dissemination through capitalist systems[2]. Nevertheless, in her work her body is presented as art through her android alter ego Cindi Mayweather and, unlike theatre, Monáe *is* the artist and not a character or actor; micropolitics become macropolitics by way of autobiographical references and experiences of oppression as a black woman and this interplay of reality and fiction creates a strong link between Monáe's work and Haraway's political cyborg ontology[3]. Like boychild, Monáe *is* her character and vice versa; her alter ego is employed as a figure of metamorphosis and an 'agent of change' for embodied technological futures[4]. Thus far, Monáe has released three concept albums, *Metropolis: Suite I (The Chase)* (2007), *The ArchAndroid* (2010), and *The Electric Lady* (2013), inspired by Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927) in which, through Mayweather, Monáe addresses issues of power and the dehumanisation of black performance in commercial marketing, creating a prophetic vision that many herald as an example of contemporary Afro-Futurist art[5].

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[1] Carolee Schneeman quoted in: Stiles and Selz, op.cit, 683

[2] Attali, op.cit, 134-135

[3] Goldberg, op,cit, 8; Ibid, 679; Moy, op.cit, 34; Haraway, 1991, 149

[4] Braidotti, 2000, 171; John Calvert, 'Janelle Monae: A New Pioneer of Afrofuturism', *The Quietus*, (September 2, 2010), unpaginated: http://thequietus.com/articles/04889-janelle-mon-e-the-archandroid-afrofuturism

[5] Francesca T. Royster, *Sounding Like a No-No, Queer Sounds and Eccentric Arts in the Post-Soul Era*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2012), 190; Calvert, op.cit, unpaginated; Emily J. Lordi, '"Calling All Stars": Janelle Monae's Black Feminist Futures', *the feminist wire*, (September 25, 2013), unpaginated:

Monáe emphasises the posthuman uniqueness of Mayweather as she is represented as a Messianic cyborg, set to return as the ArchAndroid in the year 3005 to liberate humans and machines from oppression; the use of Christian imagery may arguably reduce the android concept to a transhumanist drive for a utopic transcendence where technology is used to overcome worldly imperfections, however, Monáe's imagined revolution, whilst initiated by the saviour Mayweather, is based on the mediation between humans and technology[6]. Through affinities between nature and culture, Monáe's android prophecy has strong connections to Haraway's cyborg myth and Irigaray's 'interval' as they aim to deconstruct hierarchical dichotomies through ethical relationships between self and other[7]. This chapter will investigate the potentials of Monáe's live performance work at implementing these ideas of affinity between self/other through her android figuration, paying specific attention to the 2014 'Lowlands Festival' in The Netherlands[8].

At the beginning of the performance, she is wheeled on stage in a straight jacket (fig.26), a possible reference to her imaginary asylum 'The Palace of the Dogs' in the video for her song *Tightrope*, as a metaphor for authoritative systems that repress desire and individuality. At live concerts, Monáe has been known to disseminate her Ten Droid Commandments amongst the audience that, again, uses religious language

http://www.thefeministwire.com/2013/09/calling-all-stars-janelle-monaes-black-feminist-futures/
[6] Janell Hobson, *Body as Evidence: Mediating Race, Globalising Gender*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2012), 109; Monáe quoted in: Kate Mossman, 'Janelle Monae: 'I'm a time traveller. I have been to lots of different places', *The Guardian*, (30 June 2013), unpaginated: http://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/jun/30/janelle-monae-electric-lady-album-interview; Cook, op.cit, 7;
[7] Toye, op.cit, 187
[8] This performance has been specifically chosen because a full recording of the event is available online, see lowlands, 'Janelle Monae – Concert – Lowlands 2014', online video clip, *YouTube*, August 16, 2014: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SonH0iVGh8

to deliver its message but, like Haraway's cyborg[9], intervenes in its pre-existing

cultural capital to create a new, radicalised iconography (fig.27). Monáe wants to

redefine femininity, and urges her audience to 'transform' in the commandments,

emphasising her android myth as a process of becoming, an assemblage connecting

bodies to specific socio-cultural environments[10]. As soon as the music starts she rips

off the jacket, emphasising this idea of transformation and liberation through music.

Similarly to boychild, the performance emphasises body movement as an expression

of identity, using dance as 'nonverbal communication'[11]. During the performance of

Tightrope, Monáe is dressed in a black cape similar to that worn by James Brown

(fig.28); both her singing and dancing in this song pay homage to Brown, the

'inexplicably mashup' between this past human legacy and her futuristic android style

generating a cyborgian 'third entity' that confronts the symbolic human/labour

machine duality imposed on black people during slavery[12]. Monáe creates a prophetic

hybrid vision of the future that responds to past and present realities as a way to

reclaim the machine for Afro-American expressions of identity. During the song, the

subject position changes from 'you' to 'I' that, when performed live, allows the

audience to sing and perform the subject positions along with Monáe, establishing a

sense of collective drive[13].

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[9] Ibid, 193

[10] Monáe quoted in: Mossman, op.cit, unpaginated; fAndroids, 'Ten Droid Commandments', n.d., unpaginated: http://fandroidsmonae.weebly.com/10-droid-commandments.html; Jeffery, op.cit, 66

[11] Alexa A. Harris, 'Black Millennial Women as Digital Entrepreneurs: A New Lane on the Information Superhighway', in: Adria Y. Goldman, et. al., eds., *Black Women and Popular Culture: The Conversation Continues*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 262

[12] Calvert, op.cit, unpaginated

[13] Arns, et.al., op.cit, 208; Ytasha Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*, (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013), 114

Moreover, as well as questioning racial politics Monáe, like Polly Fibre, also challenges ideals of femininity through both her music and appearance. Like boychild, Monáe is described as androgynous because she refuses to conform to patriarchal constructions of femininity; she wears monochrome suits and uniforms as a salute to her working class family and as a symbol of class and gender mobility[14]. Her messages of android love and sexuality, which she proclaims is 'queer', emphasise the importance of embodiment and the multiplicity of relationships between organisms and machines[15]. The song *Q.U.E.E.N*, which features another pioneer of Afro-Futurist music Erykah Badu, challenges both the cultural and theological marginalisation of women, people of colour and those identifying as queer. Monáe asks 'am I good enough for your Heaven? Will your God accept me...[and] approve the way I'm made?', herself and her entire band thrusting their fists in the air at the festival on the final line 'will you preach?'[16] (fig.29). Even though Monáe presents her android alter ego as the central force for her posthuman revolution, which is emphasised by the staging of her live performances where she remains centre stage throughout the event, the focus on collaboration and community between herself, other artists and the audience, as well as the questioning of traditional religious morality, establishes a future vision built on self-chosen paths of development, a cyborgian 'sensible transcendental' that creates a horizon of existence built on respecting bodily difference[17].

[14] Calvert, op.cit, unpaginated; David Peisner, 'Monae Changes Everything' [online], *SPIN*, March 2009, 64: http://books.google.co.uk; Royster, op.cit, 188

[15] Ryan B. Patrick, 'Janelle Monáe: Android Love', *exclaim.ca*, (September 18, 2013), unpaginated: http://exclaim.ca/Music/article/janelle_monae-android_love

[16] Janelle Monáe, et.al*,* 'Q.U.E.E.N', *The Electric Lady*, (New York, NY: Bad Boy Records, 2013), unpaginated: http://genius.com/Janelle-monae-queen-lyrics

[17] Grosz, 1989, 180-181

Moreover, Monáe has cofounded a recording label for emerging artists, 'from performance artists to graphic novelists, screen writers, musicians, visual artists, graphic designers', called The Wondaland Arts Society, which promotes individuality and collaboration within the arts, seeking to give those disenfranchised by mainstream economies of representation a platform for creation and dissemination[18]. Monáe's affiliations and collaborations with other artists as well as the distribution of her work through different mediums and pathways, situates her posthuman prophecy on a multiplicity of platforms that perhaps allows for a greater accessibility in comparison to the other case studies.

However, in contrast to the uncomfortable, piercing sounds of Polly Fibre, Monáe employs a mechanism of catharsis to promote her message by stating that it is important to make messages 'palatable' to encourage others to listen[19]. She wants to 'provoke thought' in her performances but says that sometimes the music exists simply for enjoyment, something performance artists Carolee Schneeman claims reinforces patriarchal culture by representing women's bodies as entertainment, consumed by the male gaze[20]. However, the tensions between entertainment and political struggle may create an intervention in mainstream capitalist economies, and by making her message easier to digest her posthuman vision may position it alongside an Irigarian undertaking of affinity with, and love of, the Other[21]. During the performance, Monáe preaches that 'We're going to start a revolution... We say no

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[18] Monáe quoted in: Pete Lewis, 'Janelle Monae: Funky Sensation', *Blues and Soul*, Issue 1072, (2010), unpaginated: http://www.bluesandsoul.com/feature/554/janelle_monae_funky_sensation
[19] Frederike Arns et. al., 'Interpreting Meaning in/of/ Janelle Monae's 'Tightrope': Style, Groove, and Production Considered', in: Dr. Ralk von Appen et. al., eds., *Song Interpretation in 21st Century Pop Music*, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2015), 198; Hobson, op.cit, 109; Wheeler, op.cit, 41; Monáe quoted in: Mossman, op.cit, unpaginated
[20] Monáe quoted in: Mossman, op.cit, unpaginated; Schneeman quoted in: Stiles and Selz, op.cit, 683
[21] Grosz, 1989, 162

to sexism.... We say no to discrimination...' where her use of the first person plural breaks down the boundary between performer and audience, involving the viewer in her prophetic aims. There is a similarity here with Stone's operatic performance, preaching about universal powers of love and optimism, which does risk neglecting real lived experiences of struggle, but perhaps the use of audience participation establishes a prophetic 'communal awakening' that uses language and music to externalise a 'new naming of reality'[22]. Monáe, like many Afro-Futurists, confronts trauma and oppression through notions of ritual healing and transformation, portraying the freedom to love as a catalyst for revolution, and dismissing the political significance of her work because it is entertaining ignores the potentiality of this type of performance for initiating social change[23].

In *Many Moons*, the climactic finale of the performance, the lyrics reveal an interwoven story of the underground workers' city in Lang's *Metropolis* and the underground railroad of slavery, Monáe urging her audience to 'revolutionise' and 'find a way out' by flying away to a better place, the metaphor recalling Zarathustra's flight to the mountains in search of freedom in Nietzsche's philosophy of the Übermensch in 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra'. However, this imagery also invokes legends of flying Africans in American folklore, escaping slavery by growing wings and flying away, disrupting Nietzschean theories of an autonomous self-creation by recognising the self as historically and culturally articulated[24]. The android, like the feminist cyborg, recognises its origins in patriarchal and colonial systems of

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[22] Daly, op.cit, 164
[23] NK Jemisin, 'How Long 'Til Black Future Month? The Toxins of Speculative Fiction, and the Antidote that is Janelle Monae' [online], in: Jonathan Wright, ed., *Let's All Go To The Science Fiction Disco*, (Trowbridge: Wizard's Tower Press, 2013), unpaginated: https://books.google.co.uk/
[24] Dustin Kidd, *Pop Culture Freaks: Identity, Mass Media, and Society*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2014), 34-35; Ansell-Pearson, op.cit, 84, 162

oppression and incites sociosymbolic change through interconnectedness with others. Monáe speaks *'as a woman'* to empower other women, becoming a nomadic subject weaving autobiography with postmetaphysical visions of android identity[25]. She encourages the audience to participate in singing and dancing, telling them to 'come alive, do something great, be better than you were before you came in here, I love you!' as she climbs down from the stage and crowd-surfs amongst the front rows of the audience, transgressing the coded boundary between performer and audience in the hopes of creating 'love and mutual relationality'[26] (fig.30).

However, it must be recognised that these moments of 'relational presence' with the audience are monitored and controlled by her security team, underlining the power dynamics of the performance[27]. She has also been criticised for 'rigorously' managing her android image to the point where it seems 'forced', and there is the issue of her prophetic vision becoming confined to mainstream capitalist domains of fashion and music, reducing the political significance of her work to a stylistic commodity[28]. The fact her entire entourage and stage set were homogenously monochrome during the festival may potentially collapse the socio-political importance of her uniform into a brand, the repetition constructing a category of political style rather than a subversion as the uniform becomes a 'given' rather than a 'negation' of politics[29]. Moreover, whereas Polly Fibre fight the objectification of their music and costume by making

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[25] Haraway, 1991, 151; Braidotti, 1994, 25, 29
[26] Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 40
[27] Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, *Ethnographic Theology: An Inquiry into the Production of Theological Knowledge*, (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 158; Calvert, op.cit, unpaginated
[28] Christian Hoard, 'Artist of the Week: Janelle Monae', *Rolling Stone*, (June 30, 2010), unpaginated: http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/artist-of-the-week-janelle-monae-20100630; Carrie Battan, 'Janelle Monae', *Pitchfork*, (September 4 2013), unpaginated: http://pitchfork.com/features/cover-story/9210-janelle-monae; Calvert, op.cit, unpaginated; McClary, op.cit, 157
[29] Hewitt, op.cit, 152

performance a crucial component of the work, Monáe's performances could be seen as superfluous because the work already circulates on other platforms through albums and music videos.

On the other hand, the wider dissemination of Monáe's work through press and online platforms does pose questions regarding accessibility in comparison to the other case studies, particularly AOo's unrepeatable performance. Haraway has stated that it is ideological to think of the virtual as immaterial because there can never be a 'seamless, friction-free becoming', even if transhumanist theories advocate for such procedures[30]. According to Haraway, even information circling via the Internet is culturally and historically specific[31], and perhaps radical cyborg ontologies are those that continuously crossbreed between different platforms, in order to disrupt the concept of disembodiment as an absence of a physical body. The accessibility of Monáe's work and her audience-participatory performances present the 'transformative power of love' associated with Afro-Futurism, her posthuman vision aligning with Daly's description of feminist prophecy as a 'communal awakening'[32]. The materiality of the body is, of course, crucial to an ethical posthumanism, but through a continuous hybridisation of both intangible and material existence between such a multitude of bodies in Monáe's artistic practice, the divide between disembodiment and embodiment is radically subverted into nomadic becomings that are contingent on the historical and socio-political specificities of different lived experiences.

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[30] Haraway quoted in: Gane, 2006, 147-148
[31] Ibid, 148
[32] Womack, op.cit, 110; Daly, op.cit, 164

Conclusion

For all its potential problems, an exploration into cyborg ontology can confront very real and very significant issues regarding the survival of the human body within an ever-advancing information age. Questions concerning the relationship between organisms and machines will not disappear, and it is vital that these questions are examined through an ethical framework so as to account for the 'complex political-historical layerings'[1] of subjectivity. Prophesies about the future of the human body must focus on the corporeal to avoid repeating patriarchal, disembodied configurations of the posthuman. Without the materiality of the body, lived experiences of difference, which emphasise the various relationships people have with their own body, risk either be consumed into a totalising concept of a universalised existence or be erased altogether for not conforming to the ideal.

Transhumanism is one such ideological concept of the posthuman that propagates a vision of human advancement that works in line with Enlightenment humanist values of disembodiment and autonomy; as we discussed in chapter one, transhumanists believe the physicality of the material body places 'negative limits on human potential' seeking rather to use technological enhancements as a way to overcome decay and mortality[2]. Instead, an ethical posthuman ontology must recognise the physicality of the body as 'the starting point for any discussion of technology'[3], identifying the corporeal as a 'solution'[4] to the erasure of difference.

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[1] Haraway, op.cit, 174
[2] Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 102, 109
[3] Parker-Starbuck, op.cit, 93
[4] Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 108

This dissertation has built upon both such preconceived ideas of the posthuman and Toye's endeavour to 're(claim) the figure of Donna Haraway's cyborg' from its various criticisms in order for it to find 'a continued life'[5] in cyborgian performance art. Prophetic constructions of cyborg ontology in four case studies of female performance art were examined with specific reference to the philosophical work of Haraway, Irigaray, Nietzsche and their literary successors. Irigaray argued that the death of God and emergence of the Übermensch still refused to remain open 'to a female other'[6]. She argues that female subjectivity is not accounted for in the metaphysical language of philosophy because, historically, any notion of otherness has been consumed and silenced by patriarchal authors; therefore she mimicked this language, and mimicked Nietzsche, in order to establish a female voice[7]. Similarly, Haraway reappropriated the cyborg from its origins in militarism and capitalism to produce an ironic subversion of patriarchal constructions of the cyborg. Both speak as women so as to empower other women in an attempt to produce a creativity that accounts for embodied difference[8].

Haraway's 'A Cyborg Manifesto' examines some of the most crucial aspects of lived experience in our contemporary technological age, discussing not only interactions between different human bodies and machines but also ethical questions regarding the treatment of animals through inter-species relations. Haraway herself spurns 'posthumanism' as a loaded term; however, it is more radical to regard the cyborg as a posthuman ontology that emphasises posthumanity as historically and culturally specific in the face of constructions that 'privilege disembodied notions of intellect,

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[5] Toye, op.cit, 182
[6] Irigaray, 1991, 175
[7] Ansell-Pearson, op.cit, 195
[8] Braidotti, 2002, 59

rationality, mind, or soul'[9]. The four case studies of performance artists were chosen because each explores the boundary breakdowns outlined in Haraway's manifesto but through varying artistic practices. This allowed us to compare and contrast the various ways the nature/culture dualism is subverted in each example. Moreover, specifically female artists were chosen as a way to examine how a female creative voice may be established within performance art to build on Toye's investigation into a female 'cyborg writing'[10].

From drawing together each of the conclusions made about the individual case studies, it is evident that the most radical of these performances are those that continuously destabilise clear lines of communication between organisms and machines. These trips in information can create Irigarian 'intervals between', fragmenting communication to produce different meanings and interpretations, following Hayle's assertion that 'the world we understand is also the world we make'[11]. Furthermore, from reviewing the case studies we can see that the 'imprecise' breakdown between the physical and the non-physical, treated by Haraway as a only a 'sub-set' of the others, is in truth the most crucial for disrupting disembodied concepts of posthumanity[12]. It is through transgressing this threshold that the dualism of embodiment/disembodiment is manifestly subverted because it permits 'a sense of singularity without falling into a nostalgic reappraisal of an essential self'[13]. If the non-physical is understood as a type of embodiment, or as a way to represent

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[9] N. Katherine Hayles, 'Unfinished Work, From Cyborg to Cognisphere', in: Nicholas Gane, ed., 'Annual Review: Explorations of Critical Social Science', Theory, Culture & Society, vol. 23, no.7-8, December 2006, 160; Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 111
[10] Toye, op.cit, 182
[11] Ibid, 195; Hayles, op.cit, 163
[12] Haraway, 1991, 153
[13] Buchanan and Colebrook, op.cit, 163

embodied experience, then culturally coded notions of disembodiment come under threat. Culturally constructed ideals become nomadic and fluid through the continuous process of becoming; the present becomes fractured, generating interventions between the past and 'the promise of the future' and generates a new cyborg body politics that insists on the irreducibility of the question of embodied difference[14].

Establishing a conclusive cyborg ontology from this research would be antithetical to the significance of processes of becoming. However, there are comparable points of departure for an embodied cyborg ontology within each of the case studies. AOo's aim to dislocate the human from its position of uniqueness in nature is explored through their blood brotherhood with a horse where Laval-Jeantet's blood transfusion creates a non-physical, or more specifically non-visible, cyborgian hybrid. The inter-species kinship then becomes materially realised through the communication ritual and extraction of centaur blood with the relation between woman and horse unfolding in real time and space, the 'potential threat' voiced with the 'potential promise' of such an experiment reclaiming the subversive nature of the cyborg[15]. The use of physical movement to communicate is also seen in the work of boychild. The artist's intertwining of immaterial voice and gestural movement and physicality of the body accentuated with lighting and costume, interweaves individually autonomous modes of communication to generate assemblages of meaning. By miming a voice that is not hers, one that in fact belongs to nobody through its digital manipulation, the corporeal-technological hybridisation establishes new strategies for identity in excess of the real.

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[14] Grosz, 2004, 259, 261
[15] Thweatt-Bates, 2012, 89

Patriarchal configurations of Truth and Being become destabilised through new modes of existence that mimic and overload culturally coded figurations of female identity. Polly Fibre adopt an ironic fashioning of femininity, in both costume and their instruments, to create a performative polyvocality of embodied female experience. The use of physical dressmaking tools to generate intangible noises, particularly scores that fluctuate between structure and disorder, emphasise the significance of process over product, producing radicalised notions of femininity and domesticity as they are created in real time and space. Each of these case studies invent new modes of communication and language in their performance work, using technological intervention to fragment communication and produce intervals between bodies and machines, opening up perception and interpretation to multiplicity and difference.

Janelle Monáe, as a commercial recording artist, differs from the other examples as her work circulates in economies and industries that seek to perpetuate culturally coded figurations of femininity. Although her message is one of individuality and challenging the status quo, the political struggles examined in her work are at risk of becoming a brand or a style, reducing her android Other to one easily consumed by commodity cultures. However, it cannot be assumed that the other examples cannot become commoditised or exist in patriarchal economies of representation. Nor can it be assumed that Monáe's work is inherently superficial because it circulates in capitalist industries. Since her art practice exists in such a multiplicity of media, Monáe potentially disrupts the idea that performance is imperative for embodiment. This said, we should not see performance as superfluous; representations of the

physical body, and its embodied difference, must be conveyed since the dissemination of the body through both physical and non-physical platforms radicalises the actuality of disembodiment. With the increasing prevalence of immaterial forms of communication, such the Internet, a posthuman ontology that remains historically and culturally specific on both physical and non-physical platforms of representation creates the possibility for interventions into prophetic visions of the future that encourage the pseudo-transcendence of an autonomous self-creation.

However, there are wider implications from these questions of embodiment and disembodiment that lie beyond the scope of this paper, and must continue through processes of construction and deconstruction to avoid becoming a monolithic truth in itself. One of the significant aspects of an ethical cyborg figuration is that ultimately it should remain as one of a variety of posthuman ontologies because, as soon as it is rendered dominant, the concept falls back into patriarchal configurations of saviour figures and heroic ideals[16]. The cyborg is a concept embedded in industrialised, Euro-American, privilege and may bring methods of liberation for those with the access and desire for cyborgian identity, but perhaps only oppressive and exclusionary systems for those who do not[17]. The cyborg must assert its radical significance whilst also resisting becoming an idealised example of epistemological privilege, its focus on producing new, tropic languages must avoid formulating groups of orthodox followers and a monopolisation of the cyborg ontology[18]. Similarly this drive to create new ways of speaking may alienate and irritate people through a lack of understanding or desire to alter the way they communicate, restricting the

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[16] Haraway quoted in: Gane, 2006, 149
[17] Jennifer González, 'Envisioning Cyborg Bodies, Notes from Current Research', in: Chris Hables Gray (ed.), *The Cyborg Handbook*, (London, UK: Routledge, 1995), 270; Brasher, op.cit, 817
[18] Prins, op.cit, 364

epistemology to a select group or perhaps reducing the political significance of the figuration to 'mere word play'[19].

Moreover, one of the most crucial aspects of posthuman explorations is treating the human as a 'normative convention'[20] to begin with. Configurations that treat humanity qua humanity as equal, such as AOo, without accounting for lived experiences of oppression, actually reinforce dominant ideologies of Being through a universalisation of bodily experience. Haraway's cyborg ontology must also be opened up to account for political issues such as sexuality, race, class and ability and their intersections if it is to account for an ethical posthuman figuration. The case studies chosen for this investigation into a female embodied cyborg have raised some important issues regarding prophetic visions of an ethical future, each incarnating different aspects of a cyborg body politic set out by Haraway. However, these artistic configurations must continue through a process of questioning, especially with other ontologies, as socio-historically contingent to maintain their nomadic becoming through tensions of struggle and liberation. Such investigation must not come to a close and, as aptly stated by Jennifer González, 'this is only a beginning'[21].

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[19] Ibid, 364
[20] Braidotti, 2013, 1
[21] González, op.cit, 268

Appendix A: Images

Fig.1, Stelarc, *Street Suspension*, performance shot, July 21, 1984, Mo Gallery, New York, NY, source:
http://criticalresponse.wikispaces.com/file/view/Stelarc_Street_Suspension.jpg/22202 8346/800x530/Stelarc_Street_Suspension.jpg [Accessed September 10, 2015]

Fig.2, Art Orienté objet, *May the Horse Live in Me!*, performance shot, 2011, Galerie Kapelica, Ljubljana, Slovenia, performance shot, source:
http://laznia.nazwa.pl/artandscience_wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/horse-1.jpeg [Accessed September 10, 2015]

Fig.3 Art Orienté objet, *May the Horse Live in Me!*, performance shot, 2011, Galerie
Kapelica, Ljubljana, Slovenia, source:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx_E4DUWXbE [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.4, Art Orienté objet, *May the Horse Live in Me!*, performance shot, 2011, Galerie
Kapelica, Ljubljana, Slovenia, source:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx_E4DUWXbE [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.5, Art Orienté objet, *Pieta Australiana*, photograph, 2011, source:
http://aoo.free.fr/works-2011-014.html [Accessed September 10, 2015]

Fig.6 Giovanni Bellini, *Pieta Martinengo*, oil on panel, c.1505, Gallerie
dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy, source:
https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pietà_Martinengo#/media/File:Giovanni_bellini,_pietà_
martinengo_01.jpg [Accessed September 10, 2015]

Fig.7, Art Orienté objet, *Le Tout-Autre*, installation view, 2008, Galerie Anton Weller, Paris, France, source: http://aoo.free.fr/works-2008-003-1.html [Accessed September 10, 2015]
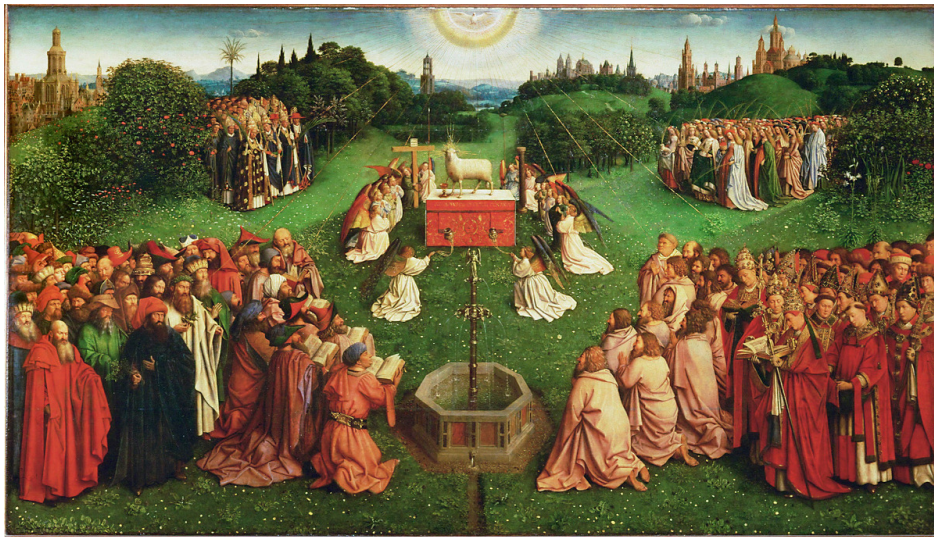
Fig.8, Jan van Eyck, *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* (detail), oil paint and tempera on wood, completed 1432, St. Bavo's Cathedral, Ghent, Belgium, source: http://www.artbible.info/art/lamb-of-god.html [Accessed September 10, 2015]

Fig.9, Art Orienté objet, *May the Horse Live in Me!*, performance shot, 2011, Galerie
Kapelica, Ljubljana, Slovenia, source:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yx_E4DUWXbE [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.10, boychild, *#untitledlipsync 1, 2 and 3*, performance shot, 2013, Rifflandia
Festival, Victoria, Canada, source:
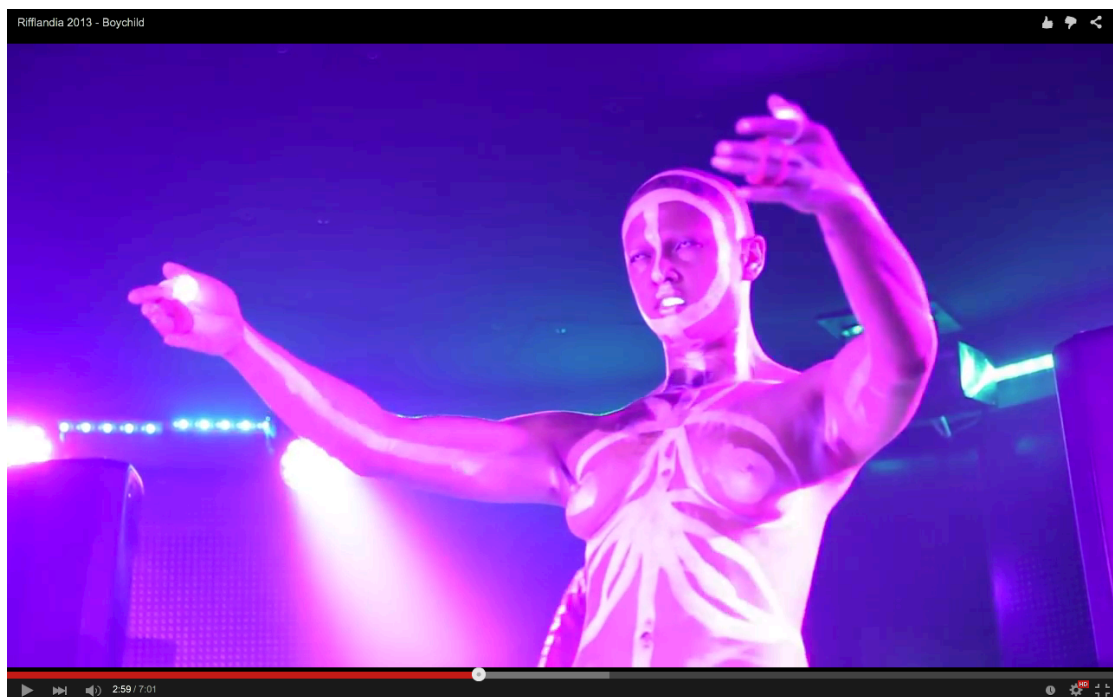https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mTlVosk4bQ [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.11, boychild, *#untitledlipsync 1, 2 and 3*, performance shot, 2013, Rifflandia
Festival, Victoria, Canada, source:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0mTlVosk4bQ [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.12, boychild, unnamed, performance shot, 2013, MoMA PS1 Party, Art Basel 2013, Delano Hotel, Miami, FL, source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_gKpl6cRyk [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.13, Yves Klein, *Anthropométries de l'époque bleue*, performance shot, 9 March 1960, Galerie internationale d'art contemporain, Paris, France, source: https://makingarthappen.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/yk-ph_0365_web.jpg?w=823 [Accessed September 10, 2015]

Fig.14, Matthew Stone, *Love Focused Like a Laser*, performance shot of boychild and Kelela, December 4th, 2013, The Hole Gallery, Shore Club Miami, FL, source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOxX6cFZJnk [Accessed September 11, 2015]
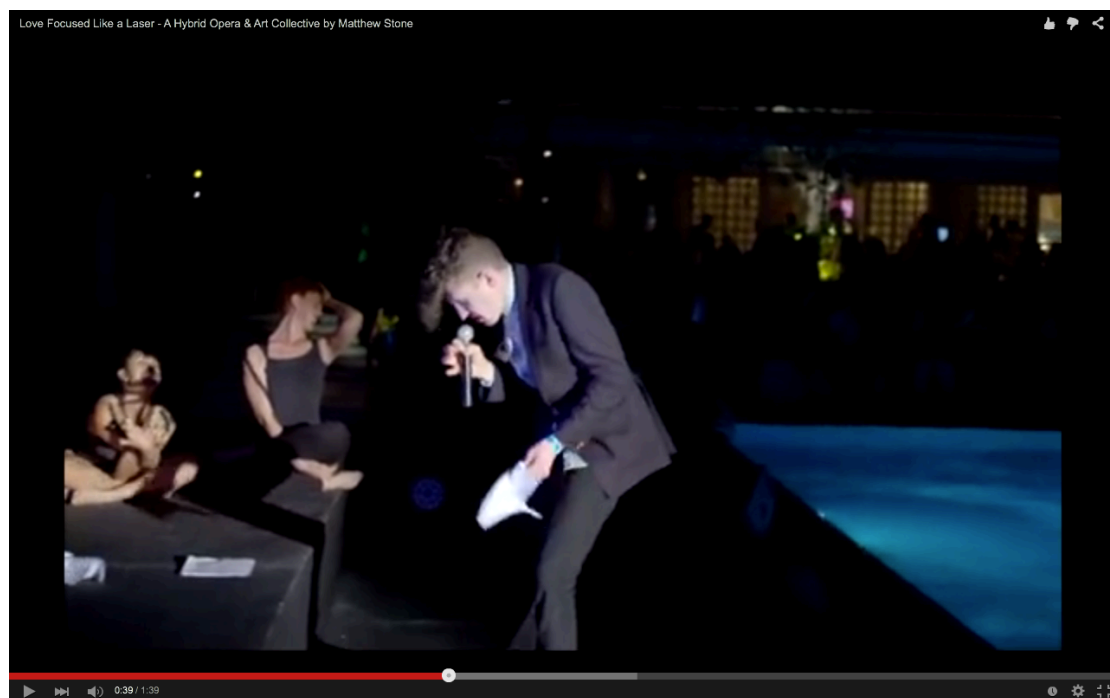

Fig.15, Matthew Stone, *Love Focused Like a Laser*, performance shot of Stone, December 4th, 2013, The Hole Gallery, Shore Club Miami, FL, source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOxX6cFZJnk [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.16, Matthew Stone, *Love Focused Like a Laser*, performance shot of boychild, December 4th, 2013, The Hole Gallery, Shore Club Miami, FL, source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOxX6cFZJnk [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.17, Wu Tsang, *A Day in the Life of Bliss*, installation view, 2014, Isabella Bortolozzi Gallery, Berlin, Germany, source: https://vimeo.com/100686105 [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.18, Kraftwerk, *The Man-Machine*, performance shot, 2004, location unknown, source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eWny2ZLCwU
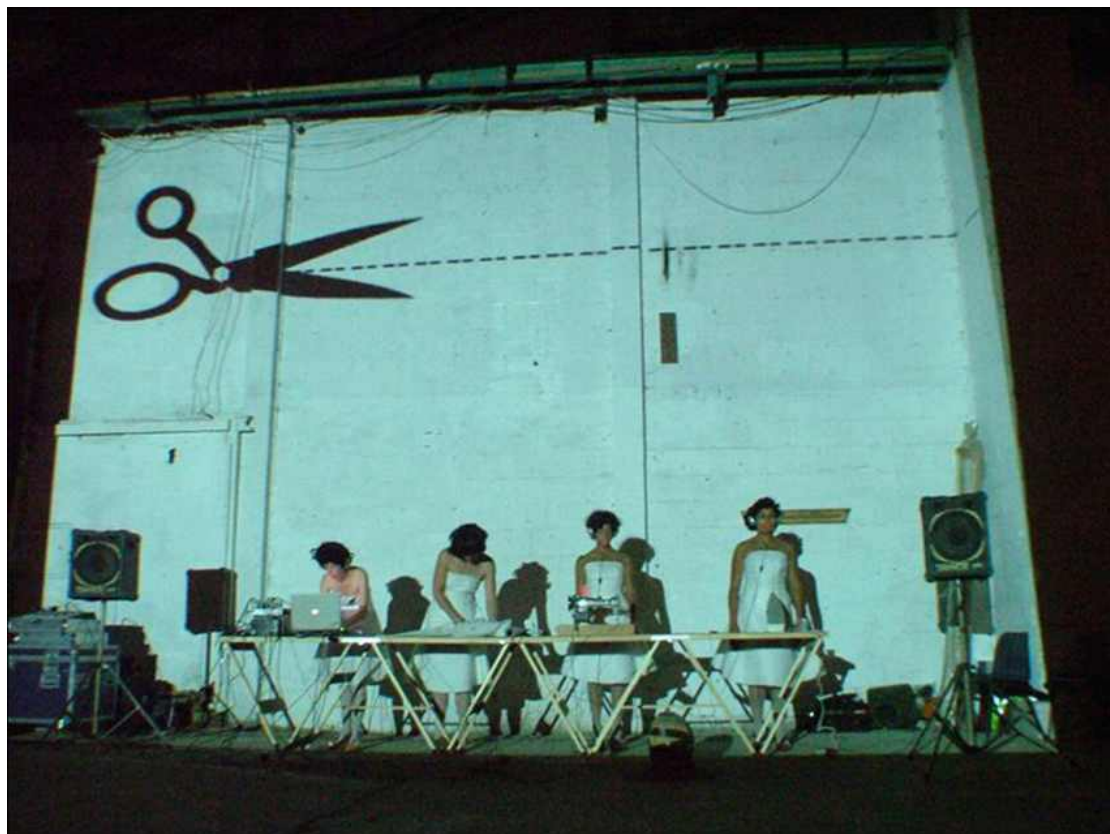
Fig.19, Polly Fibre, *Craftwork*, performance shot, 2006, Area 10, London, UK, source: http://www.pollyfibre.com/index.php?/project/craftwork/ [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.20, Polly Fibre, *Craftwork*, performance shot, 2006, Area 10, London, UK, source: http://www.pollyfibre.com/index.php?/project/craftwork/ [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.21, Polly Fibre, *Craftwork*, performance shot, 2006, Area 10, London, UK, source: http://www.pollyfibre.com/index.php?/project/craftwork/ [Accessed September 11, 2015]
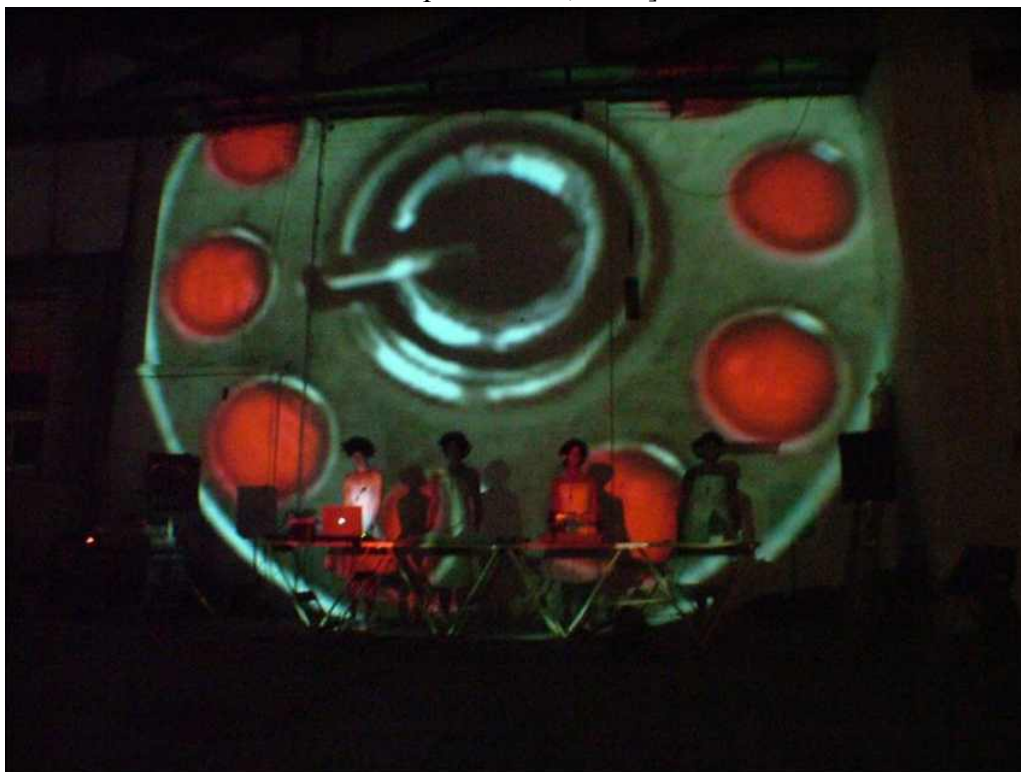
Fig.22, Kraftwerk, *The Man-Machine* album artwork, first released in May 1978, Kling Klang Studio, Düsseldorf, Germany, source: http://www.musictech.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/man-machine-cover.jpg [Accessed September 11, 2015]
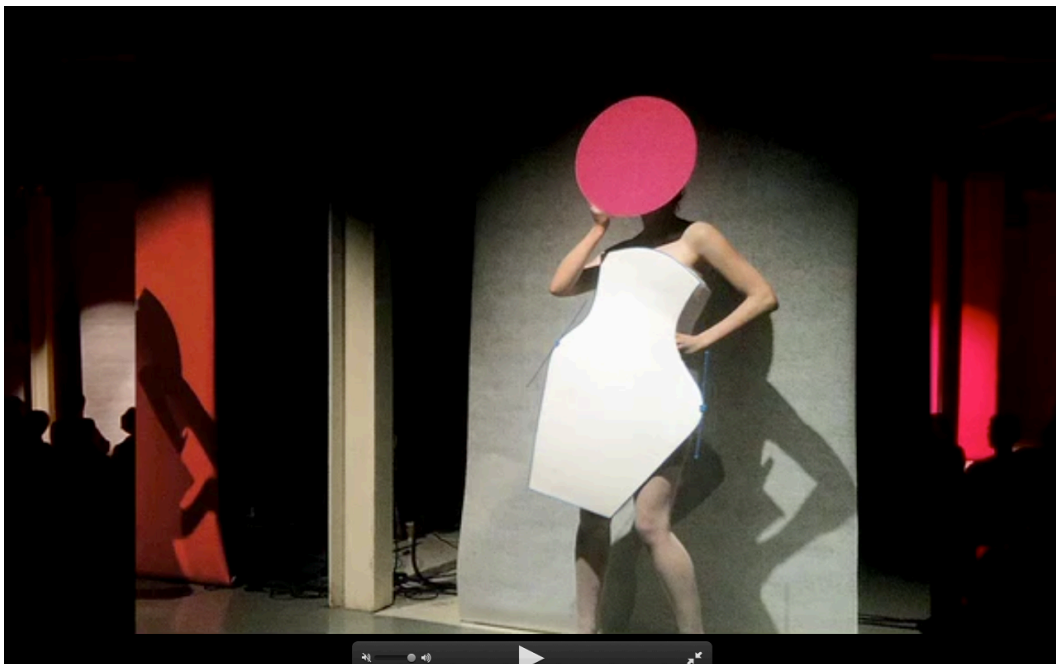

Fig.23, Polly Fibre, *Prêt-à-Médiatiser*, performance shot, Performed at Absolut Fringe, Dublin, 2011 and presented at RAPID PULSE International Performance Festival, Chicago, 2012, source: http://www.pollyfibre.com/index.php?/projects/pret-a-mediatiser/ [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.24, Polly Fibre, *Live Cut*, performance shot, 2013, The Prophetic Sound, The Cavendish Ballroom, London, UK, source: http://www.pollyfibre.com/index.php?/projects/live-cut/

Fig. 25, Polly Fibre, *Live Cut*, performance shot, 2013, The Prophetic Sound, The Cavendish Ballroom, London, UK, source: http://www.pollyfibre.com/index.php?/projects/live-cut/

Fig.26, Janelle Monáe, performance at Lowlands Festival, performance shot, 2014, Biddinghuizen, The Netherlands, source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SonH0iVGh8 [Accessed September 11, 2015]
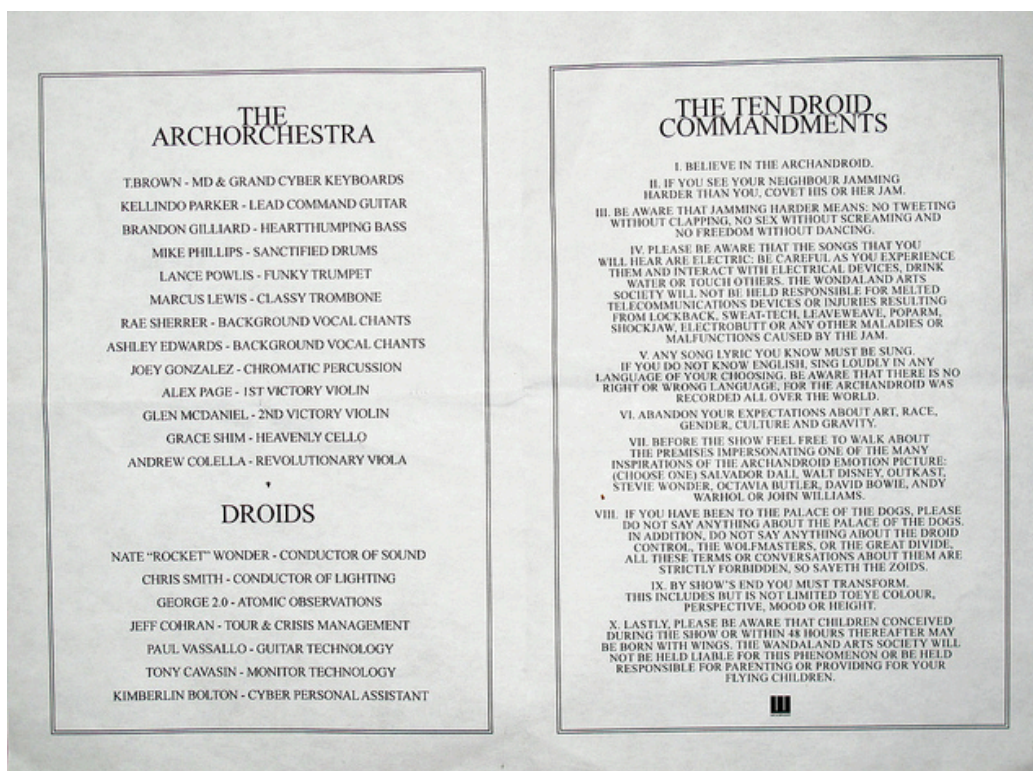

Fig.27, Janelle Monáe and The Wondaland Society, *The Ten Droid Commandments*, photograph of the paper leaflet, n.d., source: http://www.coupdemainmagazine.com/sites/default/files/5/Screen%20Shot%202013-09-13%20at%203.36.14%20PM.png [Accessed September 11, 2015]

Fig.28, Janelle Monáe, performance at Lowlands Festival, performance shot, 2014, Biddinghuizen, The Netherlands, source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SonH0iVGh8 [Accessed September 11, 2015]

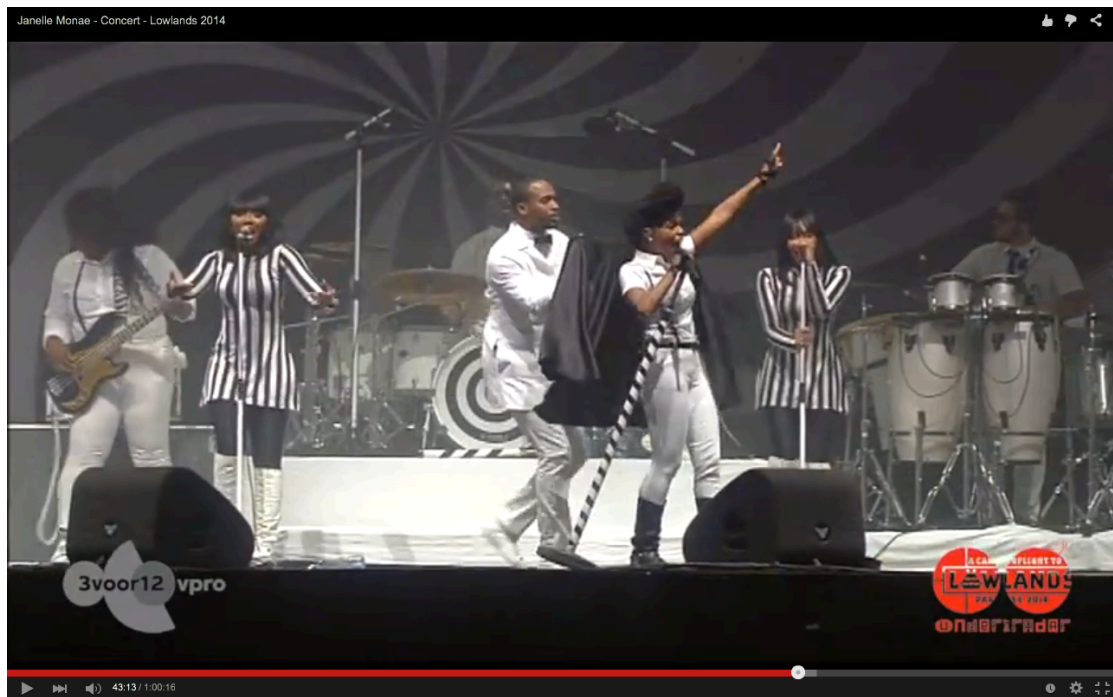

Fig.29, Janelle Monáe performance at Lowlands Festival, performance shot, 2014, Biddinghuizen, The Netherlands, source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SonH0iVGh8 [Accessed September 11, 2015]
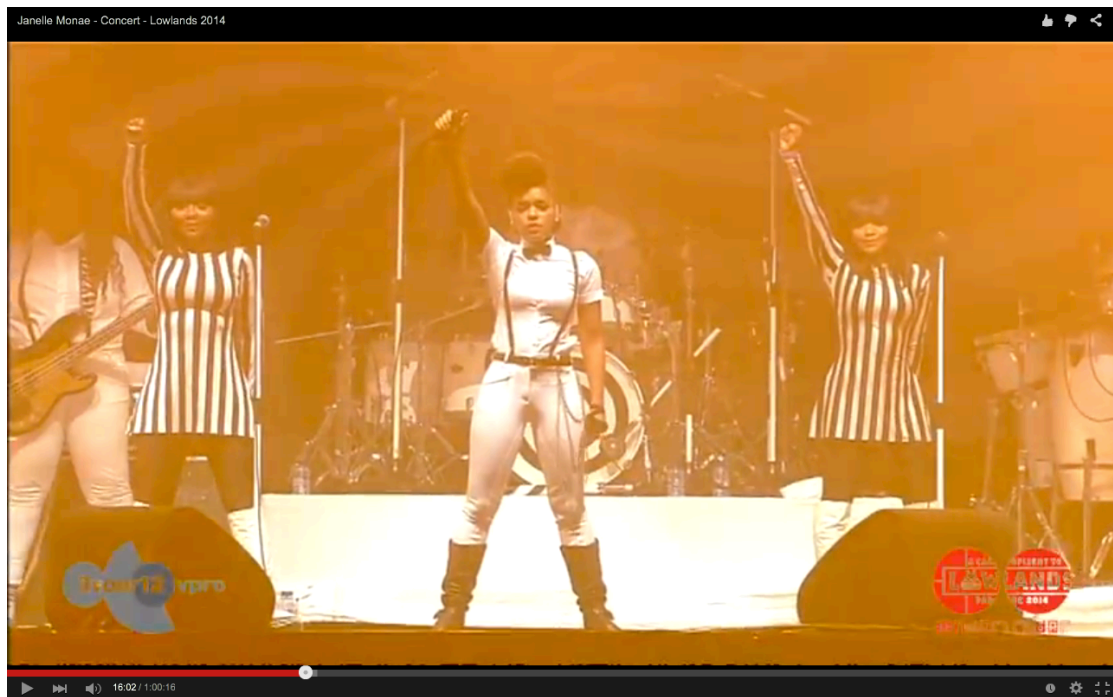
Fig.30, Janelle Monáe, performance at Lowlands Festival, performance shot, 2014, Biddinghuizen, The Netherlands, source: www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SonH0iVGh8 [Accessed September 12, 2015]

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